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Prison inmate is charged with illegal possession of 'ice' **PAGE 3**

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1 more traveler tests positive

By MARK RABAGO

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The CNMI's COVID-19 cases rose to 125 yesterday with an additional individual confirmed positive for COVID-19, according to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

CHCC said the individual was identified by travel

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:58pm, Jan 4, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,326	18	7,344
Recovered	7,047	42	7,089
Active	114	18	132
Deaths	123	0	123
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			101,407

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	124	1	125
Traced via Travel Screening	98	1	99
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			22,633*
Days since last community transmission			139

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:

- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

screening and confirmed diagnosis through testing upon arrival. It added that the individual has been safely in quarantine and was moved to the designated isolation area at the Kanoa Resort Alternative Care Site for monitoring.

CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for the most immediate contacts of the new case, including passengers on

See TRAVELER on Page 4

Atalig: Yearend shows deficit

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

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REPORTER

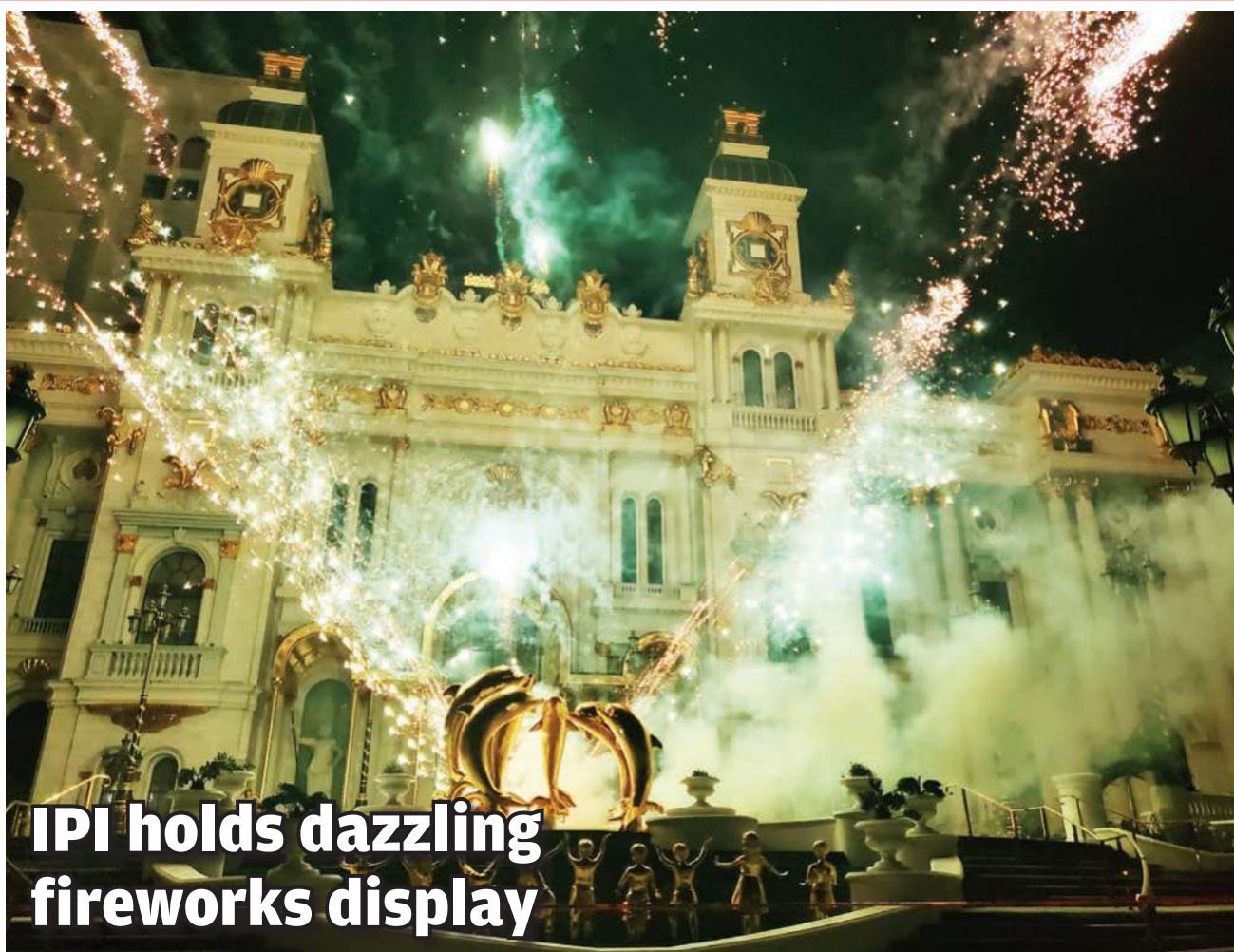
Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig said he has completed his yearend report for fiscal year 2020 and it "obviously" shows a deficit for the previous fiscal year.

Speaking at a radio news briefing last week, Atalig said he did a final review of the report that morning, Wednesday, and it would

See ATALIG on Page 4



Atalig



IPI holds dazzling fireworks display

A 30-minute fireworks display lights up the front of the Imperial Pacific Resort last Sunday night.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

» CEO says no money spent on fireworks; \$2.3M came in to pay employees' payrolls;
» IPI plans bigger party for employees, possibly upon reopening of casino this year

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

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REPORTER

The skies over western Garapan were lit up with a glittering fireworks display last Sunday night after Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC held a 30-minute fire-

works display in front of its casino/resort project.

The lights were turned on once again at the Imperial Pacific Resort building, creating an ambience and welcoming feel to their employees, families, former employees,

See IPI on Page 4

DOL adjudicating remaining 15% of PUA claims

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

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REPORTER

Over a week since the expira-

tion of the CNMI Department of Labor's Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, the department continues to

adjudicate the remaining 15% of outstanding claims.

Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente said the department

has adjudicated nearly 85% of PUA claims that they have received, leaving roughly 15% of claims that still need to be adjudicated and paid out.

See DOL on Page 4

INSIDE



LOCAL

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) takes his oath of office in Washington, D.C.

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BUSINESS

British citizens trying to return to their homes in several European countries are barred from flights.

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NATION

Nancy Pelosi is narrowly reelected speaker, giving her the reins of the House majority.

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Local

CNMI awaits official notice on travel bubble program

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REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said the CNMI is just waiting for approval from the South Korea government in order to implement the "travel bubble" program, which would be an exclusive arrangement between two jurisdictions to facilitate travel between them.

The South Korea government needs to approve the

charter flight for the travel bubble. The initial target date to have the first travel bubble flight from South Korea to the CNMI is Jan. 8.

Torres said yesterday that they will possibly get an official notice from South Korea today, Tuesday.

Speaking at a radio news briefing last week, Torres said other than the documents that they are waiting, the CNMI government will continue

to do its end here in terms of working with the Marianas Visitors Authority and private partner to have the plan executed efficiently.

"We are trying to promote the CNMI but, at the end of the day, it's a new norm of tourism," he said. That means both the CNMI community and the tourists that are coming to the CNMI must understand that there's going to be a new norm for tourism. The

governor said there's going to be some changes in dealing with tourists the way the CNMI did before COVID-19.

"We're trying to adjust but it's important that our health priorities here don't change," he said.

Torres reiterated that the system to fight against COVID-19 works and that he will not change the system.

Torres said last month that the CNMI continues to work

on reopening the tourism industry through a travel bubble agreement with source markets such as South Korea and Japan. He said the CNMI, however, has remained cau-

tious to ensure any resumption puts the health and safety of the people first.

Torres said with the collaboration developed throughout

See TRAVEL on Page 4

Lollipops rings in the new year with an ETC donation



Northern Marianas Trades Institute chief executive officer Agnes McPhetres, right, receives a \$5,000 educational tax credit donation from Penelope Hofschneider of Lollipops Inc.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Northern Marianas Trades Institute recently received a substantial donation from Lollipops Inc. in the amount of \$5,000.

The contribution by one of Saipan's longest existing toy stores is welcome news as the institute is currently working on reopening the school in phases.

The trade school received the news about the donation by Penelope Hofschneider during a recent chance meeting with NMTI chief executive officer Agnes McPhetres.

"This is Lollipops' way of showing appreciation for what the school does in building our workforce capacity for future generations to come. The donation is our commitment to curbing the current labor crisis in the CNMI," said Hofschneider.

NMTI is scheduled to open its doors to students who were abruptly forced to stop their courses at the school at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. "NMTI has an responsibility to those students as they deserve the credits already earned and we are obliged to finish what we started. These courses remain an outstanding commitment for us as we need to close these out prior to fully transitioning over toward being a government entity," McPhetres said.

The school, although unfunded during fiscal year 2021, is working with funds received from various sources, including a large bulk from the educational tax credits that businesses donate.

The funding received from Lollipops will be allocated toward finishing up the disrupted courses. According to Ross Manglona, director of Continuing Education, "The funds donated get us one step closer toward getting past that stagnant period caused by the shutdown. Providing hands-on training is a bit trickier financially than a regular academic program as we prepare students for real-world settings, meaning the training is deeply focused on repetitive processes."

McPhetres reiterated the school's gratefulness for the contribution. "As a CNMI stakeholder, Lollipops' actions speak volumes. They are committed to the wellbeing of our islands and the future of our people as our economy needs people that can make and repair things. I cannot thank them enough as I know there are other worthy organizations out there vying for such financial support. So on behalf of the students, faculty, administrators, and NMTI board of directors, I extend an *un dankulu na si yu'us ma'ase yan oloomway reemi.*" (PR)



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Prison inmate is charged with illegal possession of 'ice'

The Superior Court has found probable cause to charge a Department of Corrections inmate for illegally possessing methamphetamine or "ice" after a search of his cell turned up a baggie of crystal methamphetamine or "ice" and a glass pipe.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho found probable cause to charge Yichuan Bai with one count of illegal possession of a controlled substance. A hearing on Bai's case has been scheduled for Jan. 22 at 9am before Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo.

Bai, who is already serving time for his involvement in a drug trafficking case, was charged this time with illegal possession of a controlled substance after the cell assigned to him was found containing a clear plastic resealable zipper storage bag that contained

a crystalline substance and a glass pipe. It was learned from court documents that DOC received a tip from an unknown informant about some inmates having drugs inside their cells. It was DOC's emergency response team that conducted the search on Bai's cell.

Assistant attorney general Chester Hinds, who appeared for the government, said there is enough evidence and testimony to find probable cause to charge Bai, yet Bai has pleaded not guilty to the new charge.

Bai, through his court-appointed lawyer, Anthony Aguon, argued that the items in

question were found in his cell, not his body.

According to court documents, Department of Public Safety detective Jackson Davis said the clear plastic resealable zipper storage bag containing the crystalline substance and the glass pipe were found in a mattress inside Bai's jail cell after a search conducted by Corrections officers last Dec. 16.

Davis said the only persons who had access to the cells in that area other than Bai were Corrections officers.

The crystalline substance was tested and yielded pre-

sumptive positive for methamphetamine, Davis added.

Davis said he attempted to interview Bai the next day through an interpreter, but the "defendant refused to give a statement without a lawyer."

Asked whether the detective has learned how the contraband got into the secure facility, Davis said that, based on his interview and investigation of other Corrections personnel, it could have been smuggled in by Corrections officers. But Bai also interacted with other inmates during recreation time in the facility, Davis added. *(Kimberly A. Bautista)*

DOI applauds inclusion of insular areas in 'Operation Warp Speed'

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of the Interior has applauded President Donald J. Trump and those working on Operation Warp Speed on the inclusion of U.S. territories and freely associated states in the United States' schedule of COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

"We applaud the President's strong leadership and strategy for Operation Warp Speed in coordinating the development of a vaccine to be delivered rapidly while adhering to standards for safety and efficacy. We further applaud the White House team and our federal partners for their ongoing support to the U.S. territories and the freely associated states during this pandemic," said Interior assistant secretary, Insular and International Affairs, Douglas W. Domenech. "Our federal partners have long maintained relationships in the Pacific Islands and in the Caribbean, and during these unprecedented pandemic circumstances, these relationships have been strengthened."

Both COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna recently obtained Emergency Use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration and are now being distributed nationwide under the management of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vaccine distribution throughout the United States has already begun, with all the insular areas prepared to implement their plans for inoculation as soon as the vaccines are received in the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the CNMI, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. The federal government has been working in close consultation with island leaders in these efforts.

Vaccination plans for each of the insular areas have prioritized health care and frontline workers in line with CDC guidance, with the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam receiving their first shipment of the COVID-19 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine last Dec. 14 (Dec. 15, Guam time). For the latest on the vaccine and distribution schedules, visit the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/>.

The Dec. 11, 2020, statement from HHS and the Department of Defense on the FDA Emergency Use Authorization of a COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate can be viewed on the HHS website.

In March 2020, Interior applauded the announcement of \$2.7 million that was provided to the insular areas through the Centers for Disease Control and Protection under the 2020 Supplemental Coronavirus Act. Since the announcement of the

water service interruption on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021, from 8:30am to 4:30pm, for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers along Chalan Monsignor Martinez Road, from Shell Dandan to Happy Market, including the Joeten Commercial Building in Dandan, and Dahon Drive.

The scheduled water service interruption is to repair a 4-inch waterline break near the Saipan Travel, Inc. building in As Lito. Water service to the affected areas will resume soon after.

For the safety of the men and women at the jobsite, proceed with caution and/or take alternative routes during the period of the waterline repairs.

For more information, contact the CUC Hotline at 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). *(PR)*

CUC ADVISORIES

Water service outage in San Roque, Achugao, Tanapag

There will be an emergency water service interruption today, Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021, from 8:30am to 4:30pm, for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers in San Roque, Achugao and Tanapag areas.

This is due to an 8-inch waterline break across the Kensington Hotel Saipan in San Roque. Repairs on the waterline are anticipated to be completed by 4:30pm. Water service to the affected areas will resume soon after.

For the safety of the men and women at the jobsite, proceed with caution and/or take alternative routes during the period of the waterline repairs.

Water service outage in parts of As Lito, Dandan

There will be a scheduled

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'We're doing our best with PUA to curb concerns'

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REPORTER

Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente acknowledged that her department's implementation of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation has been imperfect, with technical glitches and unpredicted delays, but that none of them are unique to the CNMI.

Benavente said Labor acknowledges the complexity and frustration with applicable federal laws, Hawaii state law, and other limiting legal principles.

"We recognize that there is still more work to do and we look forward to working toward more solutions," said Benavente in her letter Saturday to members of the House minority bloc, which had issued a report on the feedback they have received from some constituents who've complained about Labor's disorganized

operations in implementing PUA, among 11 primary issues that the lawmakers had identified.

The other issues that the lawmakers highlighted in their 13-page report are payment delays and discrepancies, poor communications and lack of transparency, need for more training for Labor staff and a better casework management system, no priority of service for veterans, and inconsistent determinations of "qualified aliens."

The other issues include confusing forms and filing process, online portal glitches and lock-outs, teleworking claimants and off-island bank accounts in limbo, data entry errors and abrupt switches to paper checks, and devastating impacts of PUA delays on constituents' lives.

In her response, Benavente said since the enactment of the CARES Act, Labor has worked tirelessly through many challenges and unexpected obstacles—including the safe-

ty and wellbeing of the staff, complicated legal issues, and a daunting number of fraudulent claims.

"Please do not mistake the department's vigilance and prudence in navigating this complex and highly regulated federal program with anything but respect for the law and accountability for federal funding," she said.

Since launching these programs, the official said, Labor has been proactive to curb concerns and address impediments.

Specifically, she said, they have educated the community by conducting multiple outreach events, provided online resources and instructional forms, promoted transparency by publishing administrative decisions, and prioritized or adapted certain operations to meet the growing needs of the community.

Benavente said that, with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' support, federal partners' guidance, and the communi-

ty's cooperation, Labor has been able to build the CNMI's first unemployment insurance program in the short span of just three months—from the time the CARES Act was enacted to the time they received federal funding and launched the two programs.

Not only has Labor complied with all federal mandates and frequent reporting requirements, but U.S. Labor itself has applauded the CNMI's implementation and management of these programs, Benavente

pointed out.

She said despite the complications of these new programs, Labor has achieved great successes in adjudicating thousands of claims, disbursing millions of dollars into the CNMI's depressed economy, and preventing potential CNMI's liability for millions in fraudulent claims.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

DOL

From Page 1

"We're very much close to 85% of everyone who has applied for PUA and are qualified for PUA. It's a high percentage and I'm very happy," she said in an interview.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, CNMI DOL received around 18,896 claims that fall under its jurisdiction. To date, roughly 3,000 PUA claims are still being adjudicated by the department.

Currently, the department is left adjudicating claims submitted for the last week of the program, which ended on Dec. 26 and some initial claims as well.

"We had several dozens of individuals submitting PUA claims through paper for the last week of December. We had a few who were filing initial claims meaning they didn't file at all and that was amazing to see," she said.

Benavente said the department is on track in terms of adjudicating before the second round of unemployment assistance begins.

The department has also started clearing out applications that were submitted back in July that for some reason have yet to be adjudicated.

"We're actually into the ones that were processed since July. There were a few of those that we're clearing out now. These could be off-island claims, they could be fraudu-

lent claims. They are dated July and for some reason the portal didn't push them forward or the portal red-flagged them because their address was in the United States, or their bank accounts were off-island accounts so now we have to manually go in and resolve these issues or just disqualify the claimant because it is not a qualified applicant," she said.

On top of adjudicating the remaining claims on the PUA portal, Benavente said she is also happy with the number of fraudulent claims and overpayments that have been caught and stopped.

Benavente said its good thing that these issues were resolved for a smoother transition into the second round of unemployment assistance.

IPI

From Page 1

and some community members who gathered together minutes before the 8pm schedule display.

At 8pm, IPI chief executive officer Donald Browne and IPI vice president for Public Affairs Tao Xing led the crowd of mostly children across the street to clear the building's premises and place them at an optimum vantage point to watch the display. Lights at the Imperial Pacific Resort building were then turned off. Shortly after Browne spoke to employees, successive explosions were heard from the front area of IPR building, with sparks and lights shooting straight up to the sky before exploding into glittering displays. Some colorful fireworks formed dazzling spirals, while others drifted down in glittering silver showers. Some parents put their children on their shoulders to get a better view of the display. Many in the crowd "oohed" and "aahed" at the dazzling display.

Browne later said in an interview said IPI did not pay for the fireworks as they were donated. He declined to name the donor, besides describing the person as a benefactor.

Browne also disclosed that some \$2.3 million have been infused into the company and that this will take

care of the employees' six payrolls. He said the money is a loan from a credit facility.

"So employees got very excited," he said.

Browne said their problem with a bank for their payroll has already been rectified.

As to the question of why IPI had to have a fireworks display when they have problems paying their employees, Browne reiterated that IPI didn't spend any on the fireworks as it was just a donation.

Browne said not one of them know how much the fireworks costs as their involvement is only to invite their employees to watch it. The CEO said the fireworks display was intended for their employees and their families.

He said the fireworks display was planned as a show of appreciation to their employees. "So obviously, you know, this is all we can do for now," Browne said.

He said they expect to hold a bigger party sometime this year and possibly upon the reopening of the casino.

In his brief speech to employees on the side of the road, Browne said that, on behalf of the board of IPI, himself, and Tao Xing and the staff, they are thankful to everybody for coming and taking time out of their busy schedule.

Browne said the fireworks display

is just a small show of appreciation to their employees "for the great job that they have done and continue to have done."

He noted that Typhoon Soudelor hit in 2015 and they kept going, then Super Typhoon Yutu happened in 2018 and they still kept going. And now, in 2020 and 2021, there is COVID-19, which he described as the biggest pandemic since the 1930s and has been devastating economically.

"We're not giving up. The employees will not give up. So we salute the employees and their families and friends that have endured this with us," Browne said.

An IPI employee who was among those furloughed since last April said the money to buy the fireworks should have been used instead to purchase food for the staff.

"Witnessing the fireworks is like watching our money being burned," said the employee, who requested anonymity.

Another furloughed employee said she only managed to survive from donations and from her mother outside the CNMI who has been sending her money.

Senate President Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota), who was seen watching the fireworks, said he and his wife were about to have a dinner at a nearby restaurant when they saw the fireworks. He described the display as "nice."

ATALIG

From Page 1

be submitted subsequently to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and to the Legislature that same day.

Atalig said what is expected from his report is a lot of expenditures due to COVID-19, the challenges the CNMI had with the economy, and the lack of flights coming in, all coming together to hammer the government's finances as well as the economy. He said these will be discussed in details in his report.

"It's expected and it's obvious I am showing a deficit in this fiscal year and highlighting the reasons for it, and showing where and how we got to where we are today," he said.

TRAVELER

From Page 1

the same flight.

Of the CNMI's 125 COVID-19 cases, 99 were identified by travel screening while 26 were local transmissions. There are currently three persons in isolation. The CNMI has had no local transmission for the past 139 days.

COVID-19 vaccination update

On Dec. 19, 2020, CHCC and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force launched the first phase (1A) of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and continued with phase 1B on Dec. 29, 2020. As a result of the great turnout, CHCC has reached the cap of its vaccination openings for this week ahead of schedule. A total of 3,020 first dose COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered to the Saipan community.

As CHCC continues to execute the COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, the current focus for the week of Jan. 4-8, 2021, will be on persons who are bed-bound/homebound (under Phase 1A) due to health conditions specified by the Office of Aging. By doing so, there will be a temporary pause for Phase 1B of first dose COVID-19 vaccination until further notice.

In addition, second doses for the COVID-19 vaccine will be administered starting Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021, and upon completion, Phase 1A of first dose COVID-19 vac-

inations will proceed as planned. "Until we've achieved a substantial proportion of vaccinated individuals in group 1A, we will again open vaccination distribution to group 1B," CHCC said. It said it will continue to monitor the vaccination distribution numbers. "In order to plan for each phase, we will need to monitor each preceding phase."

CHCC reminds those who have scheduled vaccination appointments to not miss them. "It is very important that you make your appointment and receive the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine."

Researchers of the vaccines have determined that community-wide herd immunity is achieved when the level of protection increases dramatically, which is after receiving both doses.

COVID-19 in Guam

According to Guam's Joint Information Center 17 new cases of COVID-19 were identified out of 501 tests performed by the Department of Public Health and Social Services last Sunday, Jan. 3, and tests from additional labs from Friday, Jan. 1, to Sunday, Jan. 3. Six cases were identified through contact tracing. Six cases reported recent travel history and were identified in quarantine.

To date, there have been a total of 7,344 officially reported cases of COVID-19 with 123 deaths, 132 cases in active isolation and 7,089 not in active isolation.

ed to see the resumption of tourism from South Korea this January.

He said this will be a "new normal" for the industry, one that will change the way the CNMI operates with new requirements aimed at keeping the residents safe as they bring back jobs, and a level of normalcy that has been disrupted in these trying months.

TRAVEL

From Page 2

this crisis, and with months of careful consideration, planning and needed caution from the Marianas Visitors Authority, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., he is excit-

Kilili sworn in; 117th Congress begins in Washington

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) took his oath of office in Washington, D.C. at 7pm yesterday to serve as representative of the people of the Mariana Islands in the 117th U.S. Congress.

This will be Sablan's seventh term in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The House convened at noon as required by the U.S. Constitution. Following a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance, each member registered their presence to establish that a quorum was present. The House then elected Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-California) to continue to serve as Speaker; and she swore in the members in small groups in order to maintain social distancing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Last week, one newly-elected representative, Luke Letlow, a Louisiana Republican, died of the disease.

"The most important work for this Congress," Sablan said, "will be to help everyone living in our country get beyond the crisis caused by [COVID-19], to stay healthy and to recover our economy."

Congress passed last month another round of COVID-19 relief, investing in vaccine distribution, extending un-



Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), center left, took the oath of office in Washington yesterday to serve for the next two years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

employment insurance and business loans, providing one-time cash payments of \$600 to individuals, and funding schools. The House, also, voted to increase the cash payments to \$2,000, although the Republican-led Senate refused to agree. President-elect Joe Biden, who will be sworn in on Jan. 20, has already said he will ask Congress for more economic assistance for Americans struggling to cope with the pandemic.

Sablan said that he will be focused nationally on making sure students can continue their education. "I will be asking my colleagues on the House Education and Labor Committee to allow me to continue serving as chair of the Subcommittee on Early Education, Elementary and Secondary Schools," Sablan said. "Taking stock of how school closures and remote learning is impacting students and taking action to help them

keep learning will be our first concern."

The recently enacted COVID-19 relief law contained about \$69 million for the CNMI Public School System, which will "guarantee that all of our classroom teachers and support staff will not experience a single payless payday," according to Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred B. Ada.

Medicaid, food aid need

to be funded

Sablan will also continue to focus on basic safety net programs, where Americans in the Marianas and other insular areas are not treated the same as Americans elsewhere in the country.

"We were successful at getting Medicaid funding for the Marianas increased by \$120 million for this year and last and substantially lowered the local match requirement," Sablan said. "But now we

have to come back to chair Frank Pallone of the Energy and Commerce Committee and chair Anna Eshoo of the Health Subcommittee and ask for funding for next year.

"It would be more sensible simply to include the Marianas in the national Medicaid program, instead of taking this band-aid approach," Sablan said. "I will certainly be working with the incoming Biden administration, too. After all, the Obama-Biden fiscal year 2017 budget proposal called for including the Marianas in Medicaid, just like a state. Now is the time to follow through."

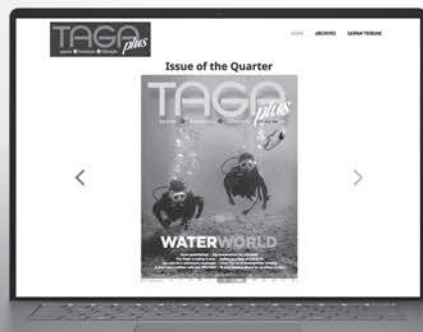
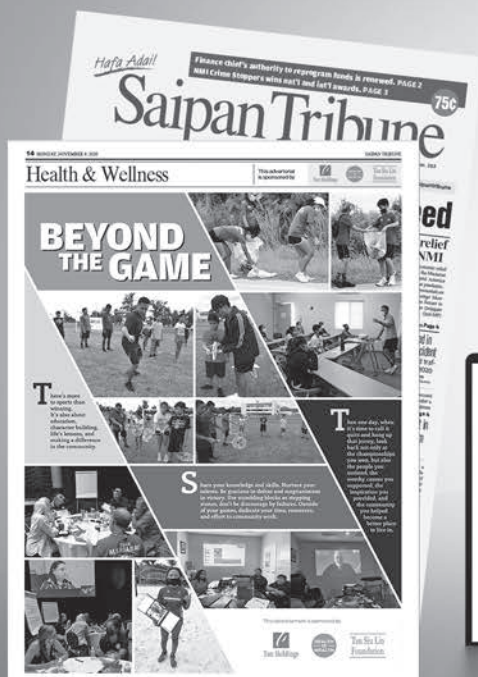
Sablan said the Marianas should also be included in the SNAP, the national food aid program. "We added \$25 million for Marianas food aid in the disaster relief law in 2019, \$2 million this year in the CARES Act, another \$12 million in the fiscal year 2021 continuing resolution, and \$14 million in December's COVID relief, but the uncertainty about how much money there will be and whether it will be enough is unfair to the people in the Marianas who need this help.

"The best answer is to include the Marianas in SNAP; and that will be my goal in the 117th Congress," Sablan said. (PR)

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Public warned of dangerous beach conditions

The public is being warned that a beach hazards statement remains in effect through late Friday night on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. A small craft advisory remains in effect until 4pm today, Tuesday.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and

compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous Indo-Pacific men-o-war jellyfish will be found along northeast, east and southeast facing reefs, while dangerous rip currents will be present along east facing reefs.

A high surf advisory was

in effect until 8am yesterday morning.

These events will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. Contact with Indo-Pacific men-o-war, alive or dead,

can cause extreme pain.

Residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are advised to avoid venturing out near reef lines facing north, east and west. Large breaking waves can knock you down and cause serious injuries. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore

and call or wave for help. Also stay out of the water, especially along northeast, east and southeast-facing beaches and reef lines. If men-o-war are not found along the beach, they could still be out in the water. If stung, take out the tentacles, wash the wound with vinegar and then treat with heat pack.

East winds 15 to 20 knots with frequent gusts of up to 30 knots and seas of 8 to 10 feet will be present in Mari-

anas coastal waters until 4 pm today. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft. Strong wind will make navigation difficult and large waves can capsize small craft. A northwest swell will gradually decrease Sunday as easterly trade-wind swell increases.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid navigating in hazardous conditions. (PR)



DONATED FACE MASKS

Mount Carmel School thanks CNMI Board of Education chair Janice Tenorio for donating more than 100 reusable child-size face masks for MCS students in the elementary grade levels as they return to face-to-face classes after Christmas break.

MCS

Bayani donates care packages

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A Filipino organization gave away care packages as Christmas presents to disadvantaged families last Dec. 23.

The Bayani Association, which is a sub-group under the United Filipino Organization, partnered with the Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church in Laguna, the Philippines to distribute the care package, which included ingredients for spaghetti, canned goods, and children's toys.

"Christmas is a time for giving and sharing. Seeing the smiles of kids means a lot

to us. Thanks to all the members for their generosity," said Bayani past president Leonila Mendoza.

The organization also thanked its volunteers who helped with the distribution: pastor Chito and Lhiza Corral, pastor Elmer and Alice Suelto, pastor Ean and Sheryll Gutierrez, Rose and Hannah Lucillo, Joseph Lucillo, Freddie and Vene Buen, Louie Susana, and Jhun and May Corral.

"Special thanks [go] to Ms. Anna Mercado who coordinated with the group in the Philippines to help with the donation," said Bayani president Annamae Adaza.

The association has been distributing care packages since last year to families in need in the CNMI and the Philippines. Last May 6, the association gave away 20-lb bags of rice each to 75 beneficiaries to help meet the increasing need for food as the COVID-19 pandemic drags on.

Mendoza, who was Bayani's president at the time, encouraged other organizations to also extend a helping hand to people in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We want to entice others to do the same, if they can extend any help possible for people who are in need," she said.

Guam Guard band performs for quarantine guests



The Guam National Guard 721st Army Band's rock ensemble brings holiday cheer to guests at the Dusit Beach Resort COVID-19 quarantine facility in Tumon on Dec. 30, 2020.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TUMON, Guam—The Guam National Guard 721st Army Band's rock ensemble brought holiday cheer to guests at the Dusit Beach Resort COVID-19 quarantine facility in Tumon last Dec. 30 by playing Christmas songs and pop hits from the resort's courtyard, prompting many guests to dance and applaud from the hotel's balconies.

Approximately 400 were present for the concert, which was also available via live stream. Also in attendance was Guam's governor, Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero.

Since the Guam Guard began assisting the government of Guam with COVID-19 quarantine facilities in May 2020, they have helped accom-

modate over 60,000 guests.

"Thank you, Army Band, for bringing some much-needed holiday cheer to our family and friends here in quarantine. You and your counterparts inside the hotel go over and above our expectations, in your professionalism and service to our people," said Leon Guerrero. "Not only are you helping to keep our island safer from COVID-19, you're able to do it with such thoughtfulness and hospitality. You truly represent the *inafa'maolek* spirit of our island and culture."

To watch the performance, or to learn about upcoming concerts from the 721st Army Band, contact the Guam National Guard's

Public Affairs office on social media or guamguardpao@gmail.com. (*Guam National Guard Public Affairs*)



From right, Spc. Syd Refugia, Spc. Christopher Bolus, and Staff Sgt. William Cunningham III, of the Guam National Guard's 721st Army Band, give a holiday performance for guests in the COVID-19 quarantine facility at the Dusit Beach Resort in Tumon on Dec. 30, 2020.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



From left, Col. Mike Cruz, assistant adjutant general, Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, and Maj. Gen. Esther Aguigui, adjutant general, observe guests in the COVID-19 quarantine facility at the Dusit Beach Resort as they enjoy a live concert by the Guam National Guard 721st Army Band's rock ensemble.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Quarantine guests dance and applaud from balconies of the Dusit Beach Resort in Tumon on Dec. 30, during a live holiday performance by the Guam National Guard's 721st Army Band rock ensemble.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Torres feels OK after his vaccination 2 weeks ago

Saying he feels good after being inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccine two weeks ago, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is encouraging everyone else to be vaccinated.

Speaking at a radio news press briefing last Wednesday, Torres said that, aside from a slight discomfort, he has not experienced any side effects such as a massive headache or migraine. He believes the

slight discomfort was just normal. Torres was injected the vaccine shot on his left arm.

"Other than that, there's nothing. No side effects. And it's been almost going on two and a half weeks. So, yeah, it's good," Torres said.

The governor said he felt the discomfort on his arm on the



Torres

next day after he got the shot but that it was not alarming. "In fact, I was telling everyone that I got the flu a month and a half ago. That was worse than the [COVID-19] vaccine. So, again, absolutely nothing. No flu, no coughing, no sneezing. So yes, I'm good," he said.

Torres was the second one

in the CNMI to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. Medical Care and Treatment Site last Dec. 19. The first one was CHCC's chief nursing officer Renea Raho.

The governor was with Governor's COVID-19 Task

Force chair Warren Villagomez and Governor's Authorized Representative Patrick Guerrero on Tinian last week to monitor the vaccine operation on the island.

Now that the vaccine is here, Torres wants to encourage everyone to take it—

"government employees, private sectors, our retirees, our *man'amko*, and every age in between that is able to get a vaccine."

For anyone with any health issues, Torres suggests consulting a physician and they'll go from there. **(Ferdie Dela Torre)**

Caregiver support group to feature Hattori's 'Living with Dementia the *Wabi-Sabi* Way'

Through storytelling, readings, photography, and personal reflections, Mary Therese Perez Hattori, a native CHamoru of Guam, will share her unique and profound perspective on caring for someone



Hattori

with dementia in Isa Psychological Services Center's online family caregiver support groups at 6pm on Wednesday, Jan. 20, and at 10am on Saturday, Jan. 23.

Her talk, titled "Living with Dementia the *Wabi-Sabi* Way," will illustrate the beauty that can be found in impermanence and imperfection and offer family caregivers of persons with dementia a way to face the arduous journey of caregiving with grace.

Hattori is one of nine children of Fermina Leon Guerrero Perez Hattori (*familian*Titang) and Paul Mitsuo Hattori. Holding a Doctor of Education, she is acting director of the Pacific Islands Development Program at the East-West Center in Hawaii and affiliate faculty for the University of Hawaii. She is also a poet, community organizer, and advocate for Micronesians and other Pacific Islanders in the United States.

Hattori's talks are part of the ongoing online support groups for family caregivers of persons with dementia hosted by the Isa Psychological Services Center at the University of Guam. The sessions are free of charge to partners, family members, and other caregivers of persons with dementia throughout Micronesia. All support groups are client-centered and confidential.

January sessions

This month's groups will be held at the following times:

■ 6pm – 8pm on Wednesday, Jan. 6

■ 10am – noon on Saturday, Jan. 9

■ 6pm – 8pm on Wednesday, Jan. 20, featuring Mary Therese Perez Hattori, Ed.D.

■ 10am – noon on Saturday, Jan. 23, featuring Mary Therese Perez Hattori, Ed.D.

Hattori will be available after her presentations to answer questions from the group participants.

What to expect

The support groups provide a safe place to share the stresses and challenges, successes and rewards of caring for a loved one with dementia with others who may be going through similar experiences. They also provide a forum for caregivers to participate in presentations led by health care professionals and other community members with expertise in caring for persons with dementia.

The support groups are facilitated by Iain Twaddle of Isa Psychological Services Center, who holds a doctorate in clinical psychology; Health Services of the Pacific social worker Rhoda Orallo, who holds a master's in social work; and Isa counselor Nikolas

Gutierrez, who holds a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Sign up to participate

The support groups launched in August in collaboration with the UOG School of Health's Guam/Micronesia Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program. They will be held year-round in 2021 at 6pm on Wednesdays and 10am on Saturdays in the first and third weeks of each month. The support groups will be conducted remotely on Zoom during the pandemic. To attend a family caregiver online support group, use the following Zoom links:

■ **Wednesday Support Group:** <https://zoom.us/j/92072878067>

■ **Saturday Support Group:** <https://zoom.us/j/91243370958>

You may also call or email Twaddle or Gutierrez at (671) 735-2883 or isa@triton.uog.edu or Orallo at (671) 735-3277 or nfscpmgr@teleguam.net. **(PR)**

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

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CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID
ITB21-CHCC/PH-EHDI-001

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JANUARY 6, 2021 TIME:10:00AM (CHST)

"PROCUREMENT OF DIAGNOSTIC AUTOMATED AUDITORY BRAINSTEM RESPONSE (AABR) MACHINE"

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

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P.O. Box 505507, Saipan
670 989 7488
Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter)
of the)
Petition for the) FCD CN
Change of) CIVIL ACTION
Name of:) NO. 20-0420-FCD
Jesse Andrew)
Concepcion) **NOTICE**
Santos) **OF HEARING**
Petitioner)

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on April 23, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom MBP, before Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 29th day December, 2020.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/ By: Deputy Clerk of Court

NORTHERN MARIANAS TRADES INSTITUTE BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING

JANUARY 7, 2021, 10:00 A.M.

NMTI CAMPUS

AGENDA

- I. Meeting Called to Order (Establishment of quorum)
- II. Adoption of Agenda
- III. Adoption of Minutes (Dec. 10, 2020)
- IV. Public Comments
- V. Reports
 - A. Chairman
 - B. CEO
 - i. Governor's Letter to CEO
 - ii. Status of NMTI's Current Operation:
 - a) Status of "Incomplete" Courses
 - b) Faculty and Staff Furlough
 - c) First Quarter Report & 2021 CWF Expenditure Plan – Sent to DOL
 - d) ETC
- VI. Executive Session
- VII. Old Business
 - A. Reports of NMTI Institutional Divisions re Divisions' Records
- VIII. New Business
 - A. Committee on Transition – Sub-Committee Reports
 - B. FY 2021 Expenditure Plan – Proposed Local Appropriation for Remaining Fiscal Year.
 - C. Establish Date for NMTI Dissolution
 - D. NMTI Current Personnel & Classes
- IX. Next Board of Director's Meeting: Date & Time
- X. Adjournment

Blue Eagle Enterprises, LLC.
is accepting application for:

20-11-88108 ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

No. of Opening: One (1)
Salary Range: \$41,000 hourly
Job Classification: Engineering Occupations
Job Duties: Prepare computation of electrical, technical drawings, specifications for electrical systems; prepare specifications for purchase of materials/equipment; estimate labor, material and construction costs for budget purposes, plan control, and direct operations of multi-venture enterprises led by electrical construction contracting business.

Qualification Requirements:
Must be a graduate of B.S. Electrical Engineering, five years work experience in related field. Must be familiar with computer systems for electrical design and drawings. Knowledge of practical application of engineering, science and technology, effective reasoning, problem solving and communication skills, management and supervisory experience in business. Interested applicants may email their comprehensive resume with employment certificates, college diploma or transcript of records to blue_eagle_enterprises@yahoo.com or may call telephone number (670) 233-3839 from Monday to Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Want a safe 2021? Get your COVID shot, and vaccinate the kids

While 2020, sadly, is the year of COVID-19, the good news is 2021 should be the year of the coronavirus vaccine. While we're at it, let's make it the year for childhood immunizations too.

The COVID-19 vaccine is being rolled out for certain health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities. On Tuesday, Chicago opened its first mass vaccination site. Immunizing health care workers does double duty: They need to be protected from the infection risk while caring for those sick with COVID-19. They also can help model for the rest of us that the vaccine is safe and necessary. Life won't return to a semblance of normal until the majority of Americans are immunized. For those in the general public, expect to get your shot as soon as spring.

Each version of the COVID-19 vaccine is tested on thousands of people to rule out dangers before receiving Food and Drug Administration approval. There is a remote chance of an allergic reaction, usually soon after getting the inoculation, according to the FDA, but it should be treatable and is no reason to skip the shot. "I feel extreme confidence in the safety and the efficacy of this vaccine," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country's top infectious disease expert, said before he received his first round of the vaccine. You trust Dr. Fauci, right?

Minor side effects, such as soreness, fatigue and headache, are more common, as with other vaccines, but that's also no reason to avoid a potentially lifesaving jab. "Those are not serious and in fact they are welcome," Dr. Allison Arwady, Chicago's public health commissioner, explained Tuesday before receiving her shot. "They are signs the immune system is responding and learning how to fight COVID," she said. "They may be unpleasant for a day or two, but they are the signs of true protection ready to take hold."

Don't skip other vaccines

The COVID-19 vaccine isn't the only protection in town, or under scrutiny, unfortunately. Since the pandemic hit, childhood immunizations have declined, exposing large numbers of people to nasty contagions.

This phenomenon showed up early. After President Donald Trump declared a national emergency on March 13, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention detected an immediate drop in orders for federally funded pediatric vaccines.

Some physicians' offices postponed routine visits, and some parents decided not to risk exposing themselves or their children to the virus. On March 24, the CDC felt obligated to post guidance stressing the importance of getting kids inoculated against a variety of serious illnesses, including measles, whooping cough, diphtheria and polio.

But the decline persisted. A new report by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association found that 40% of parents report that their children missed vaccines because of the virus. It says, "Children are on track to miss an estimated 9 million vaccination doses in 2020, a decrease of up to 26% in childhood

See WANT on Next Page



What America has learned from Iranian social media

Most Americans have no idea who Nahid Shirbisheh is. But in Iran, she has become a powerful symbol of resistance. A little over a year ago, she witnessed her son's murder at a government protest in Tehran. In November, she released a video made at the location of his killing that went viral in Iran.

When I spoke to her in November, she surprised me by thanking the Trump administration. "They mentioned my son's name and my own name and they supported my voice when my son was killed and I was in prison," she said.

President Donald Trump's Iran policy was designed mostly to coerce the regime into a better nuclear deal than the one it joined in 2015. U.S.-imposed sanctions were not meant to pressure Iran's rulers to release political prisoners or to allow a referendum on the powers of the supreme leader, as Iranian activists have been demanding for years. Even if Trump's policy had succeeded, which it didn't, Iranians would still be stuck with their oppressors.

That said, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has called out the regime's human rights abuses. He has highlighted its corruption and told the stories of its dissidents and victims. Most intriguing, he has empowered a small staff at the State Department to use Iranian social media to help craft U.S. public diplomacy with Iranians.

This is where Shirbisheh comes in. A year ago, Pompeo mentioned the murder of Shirbisheh's son, Pouya Bakhtiari, at a little-covered event on human rights in Iran. The State Department made sure that the speech was translated and promoted on the U.S. Farsi-language social media accounts.

This new approach owes a lot to Mora Namdar, an Iranian American Pompeo met in 2018 in Dallas. A lawyer by training, Namdar was hired that year as an adviser to Brian Hook, the U.S. envoy to Iran. Namdar and a social media guru named Len Khodorkovsky soon took over the State Department's Farsi-language Instagram and Telegram accounts, using them to gauge which messages resonated with the Iranian public.

Pompeo's mention of Bakhtiari was an example of how this process worked. Namdar had noticed how this particular story was trending and pressed Pompeo to include it in his speech. Likewise, the State Department's 2019 decision to ban visas for both senior regime officials and their families was driven by social media posts inside Iran expressing anger that Iranian elites were able to attend U.S. and Western universities, while many

By **ELI LAKE**

Bloomberg Opinion

Eli Lake is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering national security and foreign policy. He was the senior national security correspondent for the Daily Beast and covered national security and intelligence for the Washington Times, the New York Sun and UPI.



average Iranians were cut off from these schools.

This counts as small but meaningful change. The State Department had generally used its Farsi social media accounts as a broadcast platform — a way to reinforce what it was already saying. The department's new approach treated social media as a channel to learn what Iranians thought about both their own regime and U.S. policy.

A complementary piece of this policy involves more outreach to Iranian Americans. Under President Barack Obama, much of that outreach was done through the National Iranian American Council, an advocacy group that has largely cultivated a relationship with the Democratic Party and sought to portray Iranian Americans as supportive of diplomacy with the Iranian regime. Under Trump, the State Department went out of its way to engage Iranians who want the U.S. to help destabilize that regime.

"As we speak to Iranians who live in exile or who have made homes in the United States, we find a common thread," said Elliott Abrams, who has replaced Hook as the U.S. special envoy for Iran. Their message, he said, is this: "Don't forget the Iranian people." In his talks with Iranian Americans, Abrams said, he has heard criticism as well. They don't want U.S. policy to focus only on the regime, and they don't want diplomatic deals "that abandon the Iranian people and keep the regime in place forever."

This is not to say that the U.S. government should assume the responsibility for transitioning Iran to a democracy. That was, and should remain a task for the Iranian people. But having a small group at the State Department that follows what Iranian activists say on social media is a useful way to gauge the regime's legitimacy. Over time, it could be a valuable way to communicate directly with the Iranians who might one day be in charge of the country.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What we must do to contain COVID in 2021

Compared to other parts of the world, the Western Pacific has been comparatively fortunate. Although the region's 37 countries and areas are home to more than a quarter of the world's population, they have reported just 1% of globally confirmed cases to date. Most countries have avoided the so-called "red line," or the point where critical care needs surpass health care capacity, large numbers of health care workers are infected, service quality declines, and deaths rapidly increase.

Of course, 2020 was a very difficult year—in particular, for health care workers, and for those who have lost loved ones and livelihoods. My thoughts are with the families of these people every day, and with the health care workers who have been working so hard over the past year. We all need to remain vigilant, in order to keep case numbers down, and health systems operating, and as far as possible, transmission of the virus in check.

As we embark on a new year, there are still many unknowns about COVID-19. However, it is still useful to reflect on some of the lessons that can be learned from our experiences and what we can take forward into 2021.

There are several reasons why the Western Pacific region has fared relatively well, and important lessons that can be learned from countries in our region's experience. Clearly, long term investment is critical. Countries in the region have spent more than a decade preparing for events with pandemic potential, by strengthening their health systems in anticipation of an event like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the *Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies*, or APSED, now in its third iteration, countries developed their response plans—and, crucially, the capacities and systems to implement them. Under this shared strategy, systems were set up—such as for contact tracing—which have proven to be critical in the COVID-19 response.

» From COVID-19 containment to suppression in the Western Pacific region: 2020 Lessons for 2021

Countries that have successfully controlled COVID-19 had a very strong public health plan to manage positive cases. Most countries were able to scale up the right mix of public health interventions at the right time, to avoid health systems being totally overwhelmed.

China showed us early on that this virus could be suppressed, with strong public health interventions. Australia and New Zealand's experience has reinforced this. We also saw in places such as the Republic of Korea, the importance of quickly scaling up testing—and linking this to the public health response.

In the Pacific, where there are some of the few remaining countries in the world yet to record a single case of COVID-19, countries and areas continue to prepare their health systems. Strong public health measures, proactive communications with their public, combined with border closures and stringent border quarantine measures, have slowed or stopped the spread of COVID-19. Fiji and New Caledonia, for example, which reported cases of COVID-19 in the community earlier in 2020, have now gone more than 240 days without reporting a case of COVID-19 outside of border quarantine.

From Japan, we learned the benefits of using a cluster-based approach. And of course, Japan also taught us about the renowned three Cs. I understand that now, even small children in Japan know about the three Cs: avoiding closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings.

There are many other important factors: for instance, good systems for multi-source surveillance have been crucial—to enable countries to monitor trends, assess risks, and adapt response strategies accordingly.

Communication from trusted sources including governments, health care workers, and scientists has also been so important—for establishing and sustaining social norms around protective behaviors, and building community support for public health measures. We have been observing very effective communication in many

By **TAKESHI KASAI**

Special to the Saipan Tribune



Dr. Takeshi Kasai is regional director for the World Health Organization Western Pacific.

countries including Vietnam, Singapore, and New Zealand. I have been impressed so many times with the communication of those countries. I have also observed in many countries, a strong community commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.

I am also very proud of the spirit of solidarity that characterized interactions between countries of our region in 2020—from technical exchanges on issues such as laboratory testing and clinical management, to working together in joint incident management teams, and commitments to support equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Countries in the region really have come together, borne out of a recognition that no country is safe until every country is safe.

Of course, none of the things I have described are unique to the Western Pacific region. But they came together in 2020 in a unique way—sparing us from the scale of devastation that we are currently sadly seeing in other parts of the world. But this is obviously no time to be complacent: the pandemic is far from over, and how COVID-19 evolves in 2021 depends on all of us: our individual and collective actions will determine the course that the pandemic takes next.

As we begin this new year, I encourage everyone in COVID-19 contained countries across our region, those who are able to be together with their families and communities in-person, to discuss what they can do to be ready to apply the public health measures that we see working elsewhere in our region, as and when they are needed.

No, Joe, we're not in a 'climate crisis'

Former Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel's famous axiom is that a crisis is a terrible thing to waste. It's an even worse thing to manufacture.

Although President-elect Joe Biden obviously disagrees. Creating an unwarranted sense of drama and urgency around climate change is central to his approach, in order to catalyze action unsupported by the facts or common sense.

In announcing his climate and energy team, Biden declared climate change a crisis requiring a "unified national response." Going even further, he called it "an existential threat of our time," a frankly preposterous claim if taken literally, or even seriously.

To maintain that increasing global temperatures are a threat to human existence itself entails believing that human beings -- an endlessly adaptive species that has drastically increased its own lifespan over the past century -- will be snuffed out if the planet gets a few degrees hotter.

If the worst comes and sea levels rise significantly, we won't move away from the coasts and find better ways to control flooding. If summers get much hotter in places unaccustomed to it, we won't invest more in air conditioning. If droughts markedly increase, we won't husband our water resources more intelligently. If some areas become uninhabitable, we won't leave for more

hospitable climes.

No, a humanity that is wealthier and more technologically proficient than ever will be content to expose itself to the worst depredations of nature that it has done so much to master over the past millennium.

This is a laughable account of how the world works. The globe has been getting warmer for decades now, with no adverse effects on human population or longevity. Heck, even polar bears, once held out as the pitiable victims of global warming, aren't being driven to extinction.

In a climate speech during the campaign a few months ago, Biden relied on the tried-and-true alarmist tack of attributing every adverse weather event to global warming, including the flooding in the Midwest. Somewhat counterintuitively, Biden also blamed *drought* in the Midwest on climate change.

Finally, Biden cited Hurricane Laura, the Category 4 storm that made landfall in Louisiana, as yet more climate-driven extreme weather. The studies do show more storm activity in the Atlantic, Lomborg writes, but there's no global trend in tropical cyclones.

Biden spoke of "a feeling of dread and anxiety" over climate change, but this isn't a sentiment that, to the extent it exists at all, he wants to address or assuage. Instead, he seeks to stoke it, and

the World Health Organization declared that measles had been "eliminated" from the United States. But it's made a comeback. Last year, the CDC reported nearly 1,300 measles cases nationwide, more than triple the number in 2018, and the biggest number since 1992. Most of those infected, it said, had not been vaccinated. Whooping cough, or pertussis, has also rebounded, and up to 20 infants die of it each year.

No one should forget the fearful toll once taken by diseases that have been largely vanquished by vaccines. Before the measles vaccine, upward of 3 million Americans were infected each year, 48,000 were hospitalized and 400 to 500 of the victims died. Pertussis, which causes severe, prolonged coughing, killed about 9,000 Americans each year.

Don't fear the waiting room

It took the miracle of vaccines, and their widespread use, to largely remove these and other age-old threats. But the success

By **RICH LOWRY**

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Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

if that requires frankly distorting the scientific consensus to paint catastrophic scenarios, so be it.

There is no doubt that human activity contributes to climate change. It is a long-term challenge that we should seek to understand better and prepare to address through adaption and innovation should the worst come decades from now.

But that's not enough for Biden. He doesn't want to get us thinking about climate change, but rather to suspend all rational thought about the issue -- especially about the downsides of costly measures to crimp the U.S. economy in the name of saving the planet.

In short, he needs a crisis atmosphere, the facts and science be damned.

bred complacency, and false claims about side effects have convinced some parents to shun immunizations.

The drop this year, however, was mostly an understandable response to the pandemic. Since the spring, though, physicians have adopted precautions to make their offices safer—taking the temperature of arriving patients, limiting the number of people in waiting rooms, more disinfecting of surfaces and more use of virtual consultations. For parents who delayed shots, these changes should be reassuring.

COVID-19 may actually generate more interest in vaccinations. The expectation that a vaccine will put an end to the pandemic is a potent reminder of how valuable such innovations have been.

Polio and measles were brought under control. Next up: COVID-19, if everyone gets their shots as advised.

WANT

From Page 8






vaccination doses compared to 2019." Dr. Vincent Nelson, chief medical officer at BCBSA, says, "The possibility that preventable diseases, like polio, could become a threat to public health once again is particularly concerning."

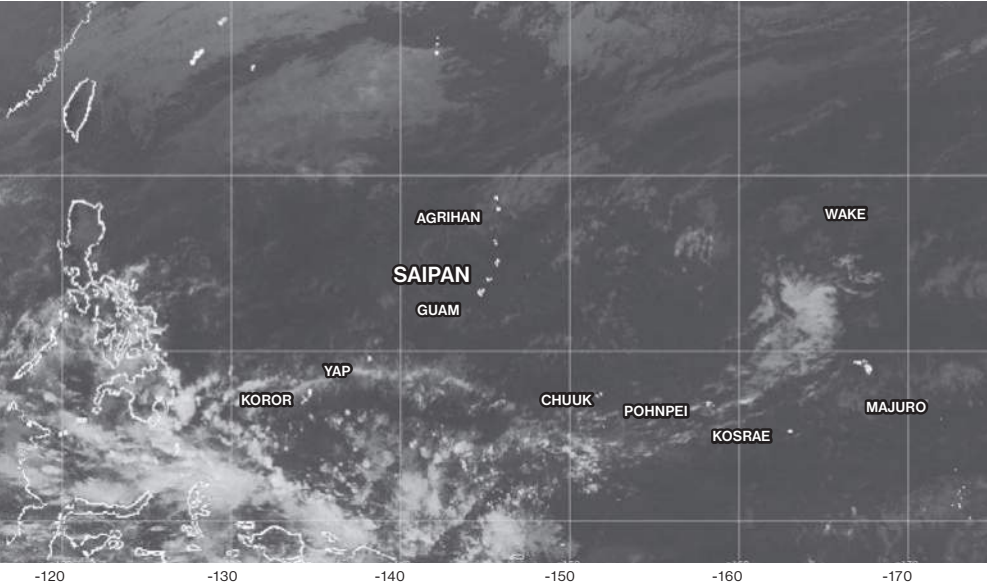
Anti-vaxxer disinformation

Well before COVID-19, doctors and public health agencies were already trying to overcome an anti-vaccine movement that has dissuaded many parents from getting their children inoculated. Every state requires immunizations for kids attending public schools, but most also allow parents to claim religious exemptions.

The movement has had an effect, and it's not good. In 2000,

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
									
Partly sunny and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	
86°	77°	86°	77°	86°	77°	87°	77°	87°	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 9:08 AM, MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 2021
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows almost no showers within the Marianas waters. Satellite does show some increased clouds to the east, or upstream, however the patchy nature suggests only isolated shower activity. The buoys reveal combined seas of 7 to 9 feet composed of a north swell and an east trade-wind swell.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.


- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20



seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mp and, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html> and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy/Wind	85° / 78°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°	
Yap	Isolated Thunderstorms	86° / 78°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°	
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:44 AM	6:00 PM
Wednesday	6:44 AM	6:00 PM
Thursday	6:45 AM	6:01 PM
Friday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	11:22 AM	11:38 PM
Wednesday	-	12:03 PM	-
Thursday	12:33 AM	12:45 PM	-
Friday	1:30 AM	1:30 PM	-
Saturday	2:28 AM	2:17 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	75° / 61°	
Beijing	Sunny	29° / 9°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	69° / 57°	
Honolulu	Sunny	81° / 71°	
London	Rain/Snow	40° / 34°	
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	63° / 45°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°	
Melbourne	Showers	67° / 58°	
Miami	Sunny	74° / 56°	
New York	Partly Cloudy	44° / 32°	
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	51° / 38°	
Paris	Cloudy	38° / 33°	
Busan	Sunny	43° / 21°	
Rome	Rain	49° / 41°	
Salem	Sunny	60° / 32°	
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	55° / 43°	
Seoul	Sunny	25° / 6°	
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	52° / 37°	
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	44° / 34°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
5:47 AM	Low Tide	-0.15	
12:53 PM	High Tide	1.76	
7:12 PM	Low Tide	0.80	
11:52 PM	High Tide	1.33	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6	UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5	UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA				1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri	1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
ROTA TO SAIPAN				1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri	1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri	1212	17:00	17:15	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM				TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable	2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
GUAM TO ROTA				2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable	2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
				2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable	2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
				2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
				2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
				2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

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Business

Britons flying home to Spain caught in post-Brexit red tape

MADRID (AP)—Blame COVID-19 travel restrictions or Brexit but whatever the cause, some British citizens trying to return to their homes in several European countries this weekend have been barred from boarding flights.

Airlines refused documents that before Brexit had been valid proof of the Britons' status as residents in Spain, Italy and Germany, although Spanish authorities claimed that the issue had been resolved by mid-Sunday.

Their ordeal came amid heightened travel restrictions due to a coronavirus variant that has been blamed for faster contagion in the U.K. and highlights the bureaucratic complexities resulting from Britain's departure from the 27-nation European Union.

Both Spanish and British authorities said Sunday that the green-colored certificate of EU citizenship with a foreign national identification number issued by Spain is still valid for British citizens residing in Spain under the bilateral provisions that followed the U.K.'s withdrawal from the bloc on Dec. 31.

But the travelers say British Airways and Iberia, which are part of the IAG group, have been refusing to let them



British travelers returning to their homes in Spain wait to speak to airline staff after they were refused entry onto planes, at London's Heathrow airport on Saturday Jan. 2, 2021.

board for the past two days.

Iberia said in a statement late Sunday that a communication from Spain's border police on Jan. 1 had created "some confusion" and that it was later clarified. British Airways

didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Around 300,000 British citizens are registered as permanent residents in Spain, although before Brexit, many more had been living full or

part-time in the country without officially registering.

Patricia Moody, a 69-year-old retiree who has called the southern Spanish town of Zurgena home for nearly four years, was among a group of at least nine people unable to board a Madrid-bound BA/Iberia flight from London's Heathrow Airport on Saturday.

Moody said she and her husband, who she says needs to see his doctor back in Spain, have spent 1,900 pounds (\$2,600) on getting tested for the virus, traveling to the airport and booking new tickets after they were refused boarding. Their second attempt was also futile.

"Throughout all the months

of negotiating Brexit, we were always assured that nothing would change for us," she said. Referring to the airlines and authorities in both countries, she added: "It's horrendous and we are suffering because of their incompetence."

Following the discovery of the coronavirus variant in the U.K., many European nations have banned all travel from the British isles except for their own nationals and U.K. citizens with residency rights.

Travelers to Pisa, Italy, and Berlin have also reported similar hurdles in boarding planes operated by Ryanair and Lufthansa despite carrying documents that had been accepted by the Italian and German

governments, respectively.

Matt Bristow, a spokesman for the British in Germany association of residents in that country, said: "This appears to be a case of U.K. airport staff not knowing what documents to accept or applying the rules more stringently than the German border police would."

Spain has been rolling out a new system to register permanent foreign residents called TIE but it's suffering a backlog due to the high number of requests. Authorities told AP that proof of application for the TIE and the "green certificate" for EU citizens were still valid to travel for British residents under the new health restrictions in place until Jan. 19.

"This should not be happening," said the U.K. embassy in Spain said in a Facebook post. "The Spanish authorities have today re-confirmed that the green residency document will be accepted for travel to return to Spain, as stated in our travel advice."

But Sam Dakin, a 32-year-old English-language teacher based in Barcelona for the last four years, and his partner, who has been in the Spanish city for 8 years, said they needed more assurances before they could rebook flights.

The couple had been blocked from flying Saturday morning despite carrying their certificate and then were refused boarding on another flight Saturday evening that British Airways had initially said they could take.

"Just because the government adviser said that we could travel, we don't know whether that will happen when we turn up at the counters," Dakin said. "We just don't know where we're going to get answers."

Minority-owned companies waited months for loans, data shows

NEW YORK (AP)—Thousands of minority-owned small businesses were at the end of the line in the government's coronavirus relief program as many struggled to find banks that would accept their applications or were disadvantaged by the terms of the program.

Data from the Paycheck Protection Program released Dec. 1 and analyzed by The Associated Press show that many minority owners desperate for a relief loan didn't receive one until the PPP's last few weeks while many more white business owners were able to get loans earlier in the program.

The program, which began April 3 and ended Aug. 8 and handed out 5.2 million loans worth \$525 billion, helped many businesses stay on their feet during a period when government measures to control the coronavirus forced many to shut down or operate at a diminished capacity. But it struggled to meet its promise of aiding communities that historically haven't gotten the help they needed.

Congress has approved a third, \$284 billion round of PPP loans. While companies that did not get loans previous-

ly have another chance at help, according to a draft of the legislation, businesses hard-hit by the virus outbreak will be eligible for a second loan.

The first round of the program saw overwhelming demand and the Small Business Administration approved \$349 billion in loans in just two weeks. But many minority-owned firms applied to multiple banks early in the program and were rejected, while others couldn't get banks to respond to their applications and inquiries.

"Many of our businesses were being turned down in the first and second round of funding. That caused application fatigue and frustration," says Ron Busby, president of the U.S. Black Chambers, a nationwide chamber of commerce.

Loan data analyzed according to ZIP codes found that in that first round of funding, six loans were approved for every 1,000 people living in the 20% of ZIP codes with the greatest proportions of white residents, nearly twice the rate of loans approved for people living in the 20% of ZIP codes with the smallest proportions of whites.

That pattern reversed itself over the final four weeks

of round two, partly because banks responded to criticism by making it easier to apply for a loan. Over the entire course of the program, the number of loans approved grew and evened out at 14 loans per 1,000 residents in the most ZIP codes with the most and fewest number of white-owned businesses.

Still, minority owners were kept waiting while their companies were in jeopardy.

"Many are hanging on by the skin of their teeth. Most are in the professional services, small retail shops, restaurants, barber shops," says Ramiro Cavazos, president of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The recent data from the SBA provided a more in-depth look at businesses that received loans than data released on July 6. The earlier data provided only limited details on loans under \$150,000; the government initially refused to release more information on those borrowers, citing privacy concerns. The AP and other news organizations successfully sued under the Freedom of Information Act to make data on all PPP loans public, leading to the latest release.

Delta CEO sees some recovery from travel slump later in 2021

DETROIT (AP)—The leader of Delta Air Lines is telling workers that he expects some recovery from the coronavirus travel downturn by the spring.

CEO Ed Bastian writes in a New Year's Day memo to employees that he expects 2021 to start with travel deeply depressed like it was last year. But as vaccines become more widely available, he expects a turning point especially in business travel. He says Delta should generate positive cash flow by the spring.

Bastian wrote that there is uncertainty over what travel demand will look like once significant numbers of people are vaccinated, and that Delta must be nimble and ready for change.

"Just as we've never experienced a global pandemic in our history, we've also never had to create and execute a plan for recovery from one," Bastian wrote. "Our success will depend on our collaboration, our willingness to be open to new ideas, our ability to adapt and our humility in recognizing that we won't always know the answers."

Air travel is less than half of what it was in 2019, but it has recovered a bit from a staggering 96% decline in mid-April of last year.

It's unclear just how quickly vaccines will be distributed across the U.S. Over the past few weeks, Trump administration health officials had talked about a goal

of shipping enough vaccine by the end of the month to inoculate 20 million Americans. Earlier this week, the government said 14 million doses had been shipped, but only 2.8 million injections had been given. Officials said there is a lag in reporting vaccinations, but they are still happening more slowly than expected. They expect the pace will pick up next week.

On Tuesday, President-elect Joe Biden said the Trump administration is "falling far behind" and vowed to ramp up the pace once he takes office on Jan. 20. In early December, Biden vowed to distribute 100 million shots in the first 100 days of his administration.

Nation

Pelosi narrowly reelected speaker, faces difficult two years

WASHINGTON (AP)—Nancy Pelosi was narrowly reelected Sunday as speaker, giving her the reins of Democrats' slender House majority as she and President-elect Joe Biden set a challenging course of producing legislation to tackle the pandemic, revive the economy and address other party priorities.

"We accept a responsibility as daunting and demanding as any that previous generations of leadership have faced," the California Democrat told the chamber as she accepted a fresh two-year term in her post, perhaps her last. Citing the 350,000 Americans who've died from COVID-19 and the millions who've lost jobs and livelihoods, she won a standing ovation when she said, "Our most urgent priority will continue to be defeating the coronavirus. And defeat it, we will."

Yet even before House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., ceremonially handed her the speaker's gavel—a normally genial moment—he provided a stark reminder of the partisan divide coloring Congress.

McCarthy accused Pelosi of over the past two years leading "the least productive Congress in nearly 50 years" and said there was a clear message in last November's elections, when Republicans gained seats by defeating a dozen Democratic incumbents. "It was a wake-up call," he said. "The question I ask of this ma-

jority: were you listening?"

Those are assertions that Democrats strongly dispute, saying it's Republicans, especially in the GOP-led Senate, who've blocked progress on pandemic aid and other issues.

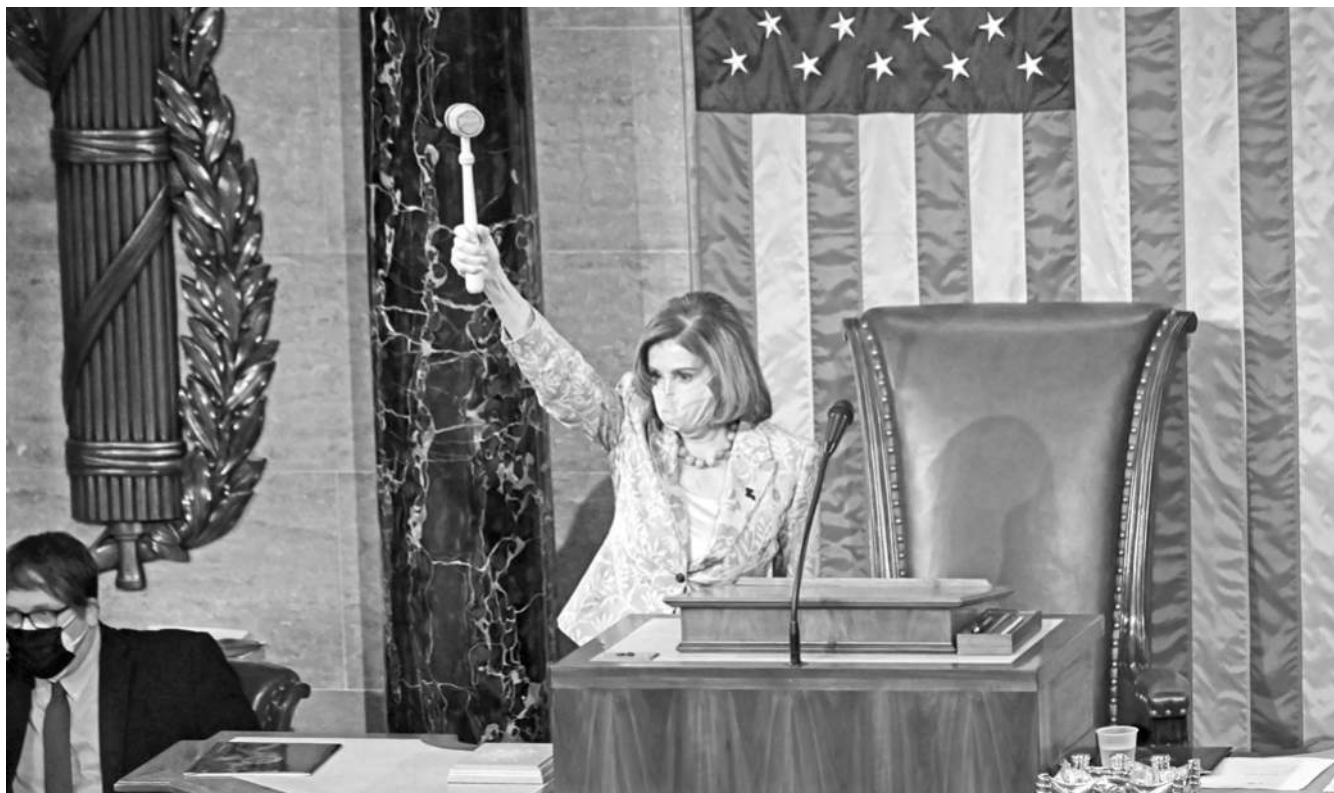
Pelosi, who has led her party in the House since 2003 and is the only woman to be speaker, received 216 votes to 209 for McCarthy, who again will be the chamber's minority leader.

It was the first vote of the new Congress, which convened Sunday with COVID-19 guidelines requiring testing and face coverings for lawmakers. There was widespread mask-wearing and far fewer legislators and guests in the chamber than usual, an unimaginable tableau when the last Congress commenced two years ago, before the pandemic struck.

Pelosi's election came 17 days before Biden is inaugurated. Yet rather than a fresh start for him and Pelosi, there are issues and undercurrents that will carry over from President Donald Trump's tempestuous administration.

Though Congress enacted—and Trump finally signed—a \$900 billion COVID-19 relief package late last month, Biden and many Democrats say they consider that measure a down payment. They say more aid is needed to bolster efforts to vaccinate the public, curb the virus and restore jobs and businesses lost to the pandemic.

Biden's priorities also include efforts on health care



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi of Calif., waves the gavel on the opening day of the 117th Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021.

and the environment.

Guiding such legislation through the House will be a challenge for Pelosi because her party's narrow majority means just a handful of defectors could be fatal.

In addition, cooperation with Republicans could be made more difficult as many in the GOP are continuing to demonstrate fealty to the divisive Trump, backing his unfounded claims that his reelection loss was tainted by fraud. Congress will meet Wednesday to officially affirm Biden's

clear Electoral College victory over Trump. Many House and Senate Republicans say they will contest the validity of some of those votes, but their efforts are certain to fail.

There was no widespread fraud in the election, which a range of election officials across the country includ-

ing Trump's former attorney general, William Barr, have confirmed. Republican governors in Arizona and Georgia, key battleground states crucial to Biden's victory, have also vouched for the integrity of the elections in their states. Nearly all the legal challenges from Trump and his allies have been

dismissed by judges, including two tossed by the Supreme Court, which includes three Trump-nominated justices.

In another hurdle for Democrats, it's not clear which party will control the Senate. Republicans will control it unless Democrats win both Senate runoff elections in Georgia on Tuesday.

Trump, on tape, presses Ga. official to 'find' him votes

ATLANTA (AP)—President Donald Trump pressured Georgia's Republican secretary of state to "find" enough votes to overturn Joe Biden's win in the state's presidential election, repeatedly citing disproven claims of fraud and raising the prospect of "criminal offense" if officials did not change the vote count, according to a recording of the conversation.

The phone call with Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger on Saturday was the latest step in an unprecedented effort by a sitting president to pressure a state official to reverse the outcome of a free and fair election that he lost. The president, who has refused to accept his loss to Democratic president-elect Biden, repeatedly argued that Raffensperger could change the certified results.

"All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have," Trump said. "Because

we won the state."

Georgia counted its votes three times before certifying Biden's win by a 11,779 margin, Raffensperger noted: "President Trump, we've had several lawsuits, and we've had to respond in court to the lawsuits and the contentions. We don't agree that you have won."

Audio snippets of the conversation were first posted online by The Washington Post. The Associated Press obtained the full audio of Trump's conversation with Georgia officials from a person on the call. The AP has a policy of not amplifying disinformation and unproven allegations. The AP will be posting the full audio as it annotates a transcript with fact check material.

Trump's renewed intervention and the persistent and unfounded claims of fraud come nearly two weeks before he leaves office and two days before twin runoff elections in Georgia that will determine

political control of the U.S. Senate.

The president used the hourlong conversation to tick through a list of claims about the election in Georgia, including that hundreds of thousands of ballots mysteriously appeared in Fulton County, which includes Atlanta. Officials have said there is no evidence of that happening.

The Georgia officials on the call are heard repeatedly pushing back against the president's assertions, telling him that he's relying on debunked theories and, in one case, selectively edited video.

At another point in the conversation, Trump appeared to threaten Raffensperger and Ryan Germany, the secretary of state's legal counsel, by suggesting both could be criminally liable if they failed to find that thousands of ballots in Fulton County had been illegally destroyed. There is no evidence to support Trump's claim.

Fauci: Vaccinations are ramping up in a 'glimmer of hope'

The U.S. ramped up COVID-19 vaccinations in the past few days after a slower-than-expected start, bringing the number of shots dispensed to about 4 million, government health officials said Sunday.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, also said on ABC's "This Week" that President-elect Joe Biden's pledge to administer 100 million shots of the vaccine within his first 100 days in office is achievable.

And he rejected President Donald Trump's false claim on Twitter that coronavirus deaths and cases in the U.S. have been greatly exaggerated.

"All you need to do ... is go into the trenches, go into the hospitals, go into the intensive care units and see what is happening. Those are real numbers, real people and real deaths," Fauci said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

The U.S. death toll has climbed past 350,000, the most of any country, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, while more than 20 million people nationwide have

been infected. States have reported record numbers of cases over the past few days, and funeral homes in Southern California are being inundated with bodies.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said the pandemic is getting worse in his city as the virus spreads rapidly within households and people let their guard down with news of a vaccine's arrival. "This is a virus that preys off of our weakness, preys off of our exhaustion," he said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Experts believe that the real numbers of U.S. deaths and infections are much higher and that many cases were overlooked, in part because of insufficient testing.

Fauci said he has seen "some little glimmer of hope" after 1.5 million doses were administered in the previous 72 hours, or an average of about 500,000 per day, a marked increase in vaccinations. He said that brings the total to about 4 million.

He acknowledged the U.S. fell short of its goal of having 20 million doses shipped and distributed by the end of December.

"There have been a couple of glitches. That's understandable," Fauci said. "We are not where we want to be, there's no doubt about that."

But he expressed optimism that the momentum will pick up by mid-January and that ultimately the U.S. will be vaccinating 1 million people a day. Biden's "goal of vaccinating 100 million people in the first 100 days is a realistic goal," Fauci said.

Dr. Moncef Slaoui, the chief science adviser to Operation Warp Speed, the government's vaccine development and distribution effort, told CBS that 17.5 million doses have been shipped. About 13 million of those have been distributed to clinics, hospitals and other places where they will be administered, according to Fauci.

The 20 million-dose goal hasn't been reached in part because local health departments and medical facilities had to stay focused on testing to handle a surge in cases, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams said. And the holiday season meant health workers were taking time off, he said.

Asia

India OKs AstraZeneca, locally made vaccines

NEW DELHI (AP)—India authorized two COVID-19 vaccines on Sunday, paving the way for a huge inoculation program to stem the coronavirus pandemic in the world's second-most populous country.

The country's drugs regulator gave emergency authorization for the vaccine developed by Oxford University and U.K.-based drugmaker AstraZeneca, and another developed by the Indian company Bharat Biotech.

Drugs Controller General Dr. Venugopal G. Somani said that both vaccines would be administered in two dosages. He said the decision to approve the vaccines was made after "careful examination" by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization, India's pharmaceutical regulator.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the vaccine approval a "decisive turning point to strengthen a spirited fight."

"It would make every Indian proud that the two vaccines that have been given emergency use approval are made in India!" Modi tweeted.

AstraZeneca has contracted Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, to make 1 billion doses of its vaccine for developing nations, including India. On

Wednesday, Britain became the first country to approve the shot.

India, however, will not allow the export of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine for several months, Adar Poonawalla, Serum Institute's CEO, said Sunday. The ban on exports means that poorer nations will probably have to wait a few months before receiving their first shots.

The move was made to ensure that vulnerable populations in India are protected and to prevent hoarding, Poonawalla said in an interview with The Associated Press.

But questions have been raised by health experts over the vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech. They point out that clinical trials began only recently, making it almost impossible for the firm to have analyzed and submitted data showing that its shots are effective in preventing illness from the coronavirus.

India has confirmed more than 10.3 million cases of the virus, second in the world behind the U.S., though its rate of infection has come down significantly from a mid-September peak. It also has reported over 149,000 deaths.

The country's initial immunization plan aims to vaccinate 300 million people—health-

care workers, front-line staff including police, and those considered vulnerable due to their age or other diseases—by August 2021. For effective distribution, over 20,000 health workers have been trained so far to administer the vaccine, the Health Ministry said.

But the plan poses a major challenge. India has one of the world's largest immunization programs, but it isn't geared around adults, and vaccine coverage remains patchy. Still, neither of the approved vaccines requires the ultra-cold storage facilities that some others do. Instead they can be stored in refrigerators, making them more feasible for the country.

Although Serum Institute of India doesn't have a written agreement with the Indian government, its chief executive, Adar Poonawalla, said India would be "given priority" and would receive most of its stockpile of around 50 million doses.

Partial results from studies for the Oxford-AstraZeneca shot in almost 24,000 people in Britain, Brazil and South Africa suggest that the vaccine is safe and about 70% effective. That isn't as good as some other vaccine candidates, and there are also concerns about how well the vaccine will protect older people.

Tibetans in exile vote in India for their political leader

DHARMSALA, India (AP)—Hundreds of Tibetans in exile braved the rain and cold Sunday in India's northern city of Dharmasala, where the exiled government is based, and voted for their new political leader as the current officeholder's five-year term nears its end.

The voters wore masks, maintained social distance and used hand sanitizer as they cast their ballots during the first round of the election. Many assisted elderly voters to fill the correct forms.

In this first phase of voting, two candidates for the top government post of president will be shortlisted, including 90 parliamentarians. The second and final round of voting will take place in April.

"By this we are sending a clear message to Beijing that Tibet is under occupation but Tibetans in exile are free. And given a chance, an opportunity, we prefer democracy," said Lobsang Sangay, who will soon be finishing his second and final term as the Tibetan

political leader. "No matter what you do, the pride of Tibetans, the sense of Tibetans, is to be democratic and practice democracy."

Formed in 1959, Tibet's government-in-exile—now called the Central Tibetan Administration—has executive, judiciary and legislative branches, with candidates for the office of sikyong, or president, elected since 2011 by popular vote.

China says Tibet has historically been part of its territory since the mid-13th century, and its Communist Party has governed the Himalayan region since 1951. But many Tibetans say that they were effectively independent for most of their history, and that the Chinese government wants to exploit their resource-rich region while crushing their cultural identity.

The Dalai Lama, the Tibetans' exiled spiritual leader, and his followers have been living in Dharmasala since they fled Tibet after a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule.

Many young Tibetans are contesting the parliamentary election this year. As the Dalai Lama grows older, there is a growing realization among the Tibetan youth that they should participate more in the government.

"As somebody who has studied technology, I believe I can try and make the parliamentary communications more secure and fill the gaps in information database," said Lobsang Sither, 38, who is contesting the current election.

Sither said that the previous governments have largely focused on the Tibetan diaspora and not enough on Tibetans inside Tibet.

"That has to change. Unless we have reliable information on the situation inside Tibet, we cannot formulate policies to assist Tibetans there," said Sither.

China doesn't recognize the Tibetan government-in-exile, and hasn't held any dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama since 2010. India considers Tibet as part of China, though it is hosting the Tibetan exiles.

World

Rally in Baghdad marks 1 year since general's killing

BAGHDAD (AP)—Chanting anti-American slogans, thousands of Iraqis converged on a landmark square in central Baghdad on Sunday to commemorate the anniversary of the killing of a powerful Iranian general and a top Iraqi militia leader in a U.S. drone strike.

Roads leading to Tahrir Square were closed off and security was tight as the crowds gathered in response to a call by powerful Iran-backed militias for a rally marking the occasion and demanding the expulsion of U.S. troops from Iraq.

"No, no to America!" shouted some in the largely mask-less crowd. "You killed our guest. There is no place here for your embassy," read some of the banners.

Protesters at one point set fire to a large U.S. flag, drawing cheers from the crowd.

The killing of Gen. Qasim Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad's airport pushed Tehran and Washington perilously close to all-out conflict and sparked outrage in Iraq, leading parliament to pass a non-binding resolution days later calling for the expulsion of all foreign troops from Iraq.

Sunday's rally was being held amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. in the final days of Presi-



A supporter of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces, holds a photo of him during a protest in Tahrir Square, Iraq, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021.

dent Donald Trump's administration.

Already, America has conducted B-52 bomber flyovers and sent a nuclear submarine into the Persian Gulf over what Trump officials describe as the possibility of an Iranian attack on the anniversary of the strike that killed Soleimani and al-Muhandis.

Carrying Iraqi and militia flags and posters of the two men, thousands of Iraqis marched toward Tahrir Square for the rally Sunday, demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops in implementation of the parliamentary resolution. The event was organized by mostly Iran-backed militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

"We call upon the govern-

ment and the parliament to expel the occupying foreign forces, especially the brutal American forces, the infidels, the immoral, who killed the heroes and leaders of victory," said Muhammad Shubir al-Husseini, a protester.

Abbas Ali, a 27-year-old protester carrying a poster of Soleimani, said he was there because it was a day "to remember those who sacrificed their souls for Iraq."

Soleimani headed the elite Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, responsible for the Islamic Republic's foreign operations, and he frequently shuttled between Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Al-Muhandis was Iraq's most powerful militia leader and was deputy commander of the PMF.

Israeli prosecutors spell out allegations against Netanyahu

JERUSALEM (AP)—Israeli prosecutors on Sunday released an amended indictment spelling out detailed charges against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a corruption case in which he is accused of trading favors with a powerful media mogul.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three corruption cases. One of them alleges that Netanyahu promoted regulations worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the owner of the Bezeq telecom company in exchange for positive coverage on its popular Walla news site.

In response to a request from Netanyahu's lawyers for more details, Israeli prosecutors released a letter Sunday alleging there had been 315 incidents of Walla being requested to make its coverage more favorable for Netanyahu and his family. They said there were indications that Netanyahu was personally involved

in 150 of those incidents.

It said the requests included giving more time or prominence to positive articles about Netanyahu and his family, changing headlines and lowering or even removing unfavorable stories. It also included alleged requests for negative coverage of Netanyahu's rivals.

The document listed all 315 suspected incidents, which allegedly included numerous requests to publish flattering articles and photos of Netanyahu's wife Sara, to conceal reports of embarrassing expenditures and personal information about the Netanyahu family and attempts to embarrass his rivals. It quoted Bezeq's controlling shareholder at the time, Shaul Elovitch, as expressing concerns that Netanyahu would not approve lucrative business deals for the company if negative articles were published.

On Jan. 17-19, 2013, for

instance, it said a Netanyahu associate persuaded Elovitch to publish stories saying that the wife of Naftali Bennett, head of a rival religious party, worked in a non-kosher restaurant. Several weeks later, Netanyahu, through the same associate, allegedly pressed Walla to remove critical articles about a lacy dress his wife had worn to the swearing-in of the new parliament and replace it with favorable reviews. The site consented to both requests, it said.

On another occasion, Elovitch, at Netanyahu's request, allegedly ordered Walla to halt a live broadcast of a rally by Netanyahu's opponents during the country's 2015 election campaign.

Netanyahu's trial began last year and is scheduled to resume next month. He denies all charges against him, saying he is the victim of a witch hunt orchestrated by a hostile media, police and prosecutors.

Overdrive

By PHOEBE WALL HOWARD
DETROIT FREE PRESS

The Bronco Sport wasn't in the original plan at Ford.

It started out as a boxy, bland, nondescript, unmemorable small SUV.

Definitely not part of a legendary Bronco family.

And the Mustang Mach-E SUV was initially going to be a cautious toe in the water for an automaker debuting its first all-electric vehicle. It was conceived to help meet fuel economy targets for the company.

Now each SUV has a waiting list.

Owners of the 2021 Bronco Sport report being treated like Hollywood royalty. And the impressive off-road driving features have been designed to challenge Jeep and live up to the qualities that make the Bronco one of the most valuable collector cars in history.

Buyers are clamoring for the Mach-E; a dealer in California reported 40 orders in a single night. It, too, had to meet the power and driving experience of a nameplate that has come to define the company.

This is the secret story of tearing up designs and going for broke.

No one knew

The dramatic change in direction began 3 1/2 years ago with no public discussion.

Jim Hackett, named CEO in May 2017, decided to bring Jim Farley back from Europe and appoint him president of Ford global markets. Farley plunged into the new role that summer.

Behind the scenes, Hackett and Farley divvied up new product programs into three

categories: so far down the pipeline that there couldn't be substantial and meaningful change, pretty far along but not so far that changes couldn't be made and just the beginning with a lot of flexibility.

Bronco Sport and Mach-E fell into the middle category; it wasn't too late to revise.

Ford wanted to do an assessment of the products in the pipeline, see where improvements might be made and feel confident they were building the right products for a dynamic consumer environment.

Hackett wasn't thrilled. In the Mach-E prototype, he saw an electric vehicle that had a tall roof and few interesting features. Designers showed their sketches and clay models.

Senior Ford executives felt the whole thing wasn't a breakthrough moment. Ford realized competitors would soon be flooding the market with all-electric vehicles. The 117-year-old carmaker needed to stand out.

Their all-electric vehicle, at that point, was unexciting.

"It was just a car," said Ted Cannis, global director of electrification at Ford, in a 2019 company video.

Farley added, "When I first saw it ... I said, 'Oh, boy. Houston, we have a problem.' The vehicle looked like a science project."

Chris Walter, Mach-E exterior design manager, said, "I thought to myself, 'Who's gonna want to buy this car?'"

Debra Hands, aerodynamics supervisor, said, "It wasn't exactly an SUV. It wasn't exactly a sedan."

Hackett said, "We tore up the existing prototype. We said, 'We want to start over.'"

Farley steps in

Jim Baumbick, senior product development executive on both projects, told the Free Press on Tuesday that while all vehicles have a natural evolution, these were unique in that they were connected to two iconic brands. Farley, in his global markets role, "was a big part of the inspiration."

It was about identifying obvious product strengths in a crowded marketplace and harnessing those, Baumbick said. "The designs we had weren't going to do that. There's nothing that was unique about them."

'Controversial'

Mark Truby, chief communications officer, who attended some of the meetings, said, "Jim Farley was instrumental on pushing the team in the Mustang direction. ...

"It was tricky territory and controversial. Farley said, 'What if we could use the Mustang as a spiritual lodestar for this vehicle?' And the designers got to work," Truby said. "They had all these examples of more Mustang, less Mustang. It led to the Mustang Mach-E."

The man who put his fingerprints on the design and pushed the designers to get out of their comfort zone and get into new territory, that was very much Farley, Truby said. But it was Hackett who urged the team to reexamine the product line.

Hackett and Farley had to say to Bill Ford, "We're thinking of doing something." And Ford, executive chairman of the company and a longtime fan of the classic Mustang, said, "You're not messing with the Mustang are you?"

Bill Ford has admitted publicly his first reaction was,

well, no way.

Hackett, Farley and Ford met repeatedly. Ford said it would take a lot of convincing to get him to sign off on changing the silhouette of the pony car. They knew it would bring controversy, and it has.

In early 2019, the three executives were joined by Hau Thai-Tang, longtime chief of product development, on the 12th Floor of Ford World Headquarters. The walls were covered with images of the vehicle, the Mach-E lined up with other Mustangs to illustrate how it compared, along with market research and the business case in an otherwise empty conference room.

The team went through step by step with Bill Ford, helping him get comfortable with the idea. He asked tough questions.

Farley acknowledged the discomfort, and Ford indicated he was warming to the idea but wanted to drive the vehicle and see it in the flesh.

"The designers were unleashed," Truby recalled. "We had a lot of debate about the Mach-E with Mustang cues or so far as putting the pony on the badge and calling it a Mustang."

At this point, Farley, a former Toyota executive, said new Ford products simply had to have a strong identity, opinion, attitude. He wanted sharper design and new technology. If a Ford didn't have a Blue Oval, he wanted consumers to recognize it anyway.

The Mach-E debuted in November 2019 at the L.A. Auto Show.

Mustang Mach-E means the Mustang coupe isn't going anywhere and will help Ford keep the Mustang GT with a 5-liter V8 because of Mach-E's

positive impact on overall fuel economy. The Mustang Mach-E GT Performance Edition hits 60 mph in 3.5 seconds.

Baby Bronco born

Then, when Farley turned to the upcoming midsize SUV in the pipeline, he led a team of executives who came up with the idea of making Bronco a family instead of just the traditional 2-door and 4-door Bronco. So Bronco Sport was redesigned to mirror the rugged classic Bronco.

"I love getting in the design dome and arguing about a design of a vehicle," Farley told his cousin during a "Digging in with Tripp" Tracy podcast aired on Nov. 10.

"In business, often people say you're a coach if you're leading an organization. I think it's more a captain of a ship, in a way," Farley said. "It can't be just a meritocracy. You need someone who makes the call."

Hackett put Joe Hinrichs in charge of manufacturing operations and Farley in charge of "autos 2.0" and the future in April 2019. The move "accelerates progress" on global business redesign and product resurgence, the company said in a news release.

No one really knew what that meant at the time.

Farley went from sharing the No. 2 lieutenant spot under Hackett to becoming chief operating officer in February 2020 and then CEO in October 2020.

Now Farley is leading the launches for products he helped bring to life.

"He wants to spend time in the design studio and product development to understand the thinking," Truby said.

After the early production

Mustang Mach-E emerged, engineers had to plead with Bill Ford to give the one he'd been testing back.

Edmunds recently ranked the Mach-E as superior to Tesla, Porsche and Audi in the luxury SUV category. And first-drives of the Bronco Sport have stunned reviewers including Free Press critic Mark Phelan, past president of the North American Car, Utility and Truck of the Year jury.

Wall Street analysts are noticing.

"The executive can help shape the narrative and there is also a piece of this that comes down to execution," Dan Levy, an analyst at Credit-Suisse, told the Free Press. "What Farley brings, I think there is some optimism that has emerged, that he can change some of the missteps of Ford. People are hopeful things will turnaround."

Industry analysts noticed what they called "profit compression" under Hackett that now requires cost reduction and refocus.

"Farley is pushing this home. The emphasis at Ford is coming from the perspective of winning franchises now, like Bronco and Mustang. And they're focusing on things that matter," Levy said, noting that he speaks from the perspective of the investment community. "By Ford's own admission, the last few years haven't really given investors a lot to be excited about, even though they give a very attractive pitch on the magnitude of opportunity for improvement."

Challenges over the past few years have been self-inflicted wounds, including costly troubled launches and skyrocketing warranty costs.

No one knew secret behind Ford's Mustang Mach-E, Bronco Sport—*until now*

TNS
This early prototype of the 2021 Mustang Mach-E is pictured at the Eastern Market in Detroit in February 2020. It is scheduled to be delivered to customers in late 2020.



Life & Style

IRS says executors undervalued Prince's estate by 50%

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—The ongoing controversy over the money left behind by Prince when he died without a will is heating up again after Internal Revenue Service calculations showed that executors of the rock star's estate undervalued it by 50%, or about \$80 million.



Prince

The IRS determined that Prince's estate is worth \$163.2

million, overshadowing the \$82.3 million valuation submitted by Comerica Bank & Trust, the estate's administrator. The discrepancy primarily involves Prince's music publishing and recording interests, according to court documents.

Documents show the IRS believes that Prince's estate owes another \$32.4 million in federal taxes, roughly dou-

bling the tax bill based on Comerica's valuation, the Star Tribune reported.

The IRS also has ordered a \$6.4 million "accuracy-related penalty" on Prince's estate, citing a "substantial" undervaluation of assets, documents show.

Prince's death of a fentanyl overdose on April 21, 2016, created one of the largest and most complicated probate court proceedings in Minnesota history. Estimates of his net worth have varied widely, from \$100 million to

\$300 million.

With Prince's probate case dragging on, his six sibling heirs have grown increasingly unhappy, particularly as the estate has doled out tens of millions of dollars to lawyers and consultants.

Comerica and its lawyers at Fredrikson & Byron in Minneapolis maintain their estate valuations are solid. Comerica sued the IRS this summer in U.S. Tax Court in Washington, D.C., saying the agency's calculations are riddled with errors.

Dirt biker who starred in HBO drama charged with murder

BALTIMORE (AP)—A renowned Baltimore dirt bike rider who appeared in an HBO drama about the city's riding scene faces murder charges for the stabbing death of her partner on New Year's Day, police said.

Lakeyria Doughty, known as "Wheelie Queen," was charged with first- and second-degree murder for killing her 33-year-

old partner, Tiffany Wilson, on Friday in West Baltimore, according to police.

"It was a domestic situation where cooler heads didn't prevail," said Detective Donny Moses, a Baltimore police spokesman. He said Doughty and Wilson were in a relationship and an argument ensued.

Doughty called 911 after

the stabbing, but Wilson died at the scene nearly four hours into the new year, the Baltimore Sun reported. It was the city's first homicide in 2021.

Doughty, 26, also faces various assault charges, including a felony, according to online court records.

Self-proclaimed "Wheelie Queen" for her stunts and skills, Doughty became a pioneer for breaking into the male-dominated dirt bike scene in Baltimore. She landed a role in the HBO film "Charm City Kings," which premiered in the fall.

'Wonder Woman 1984' adds \$5.5 million in 2nd US weekend

In its second weekend in U.S. theaters, "Wonder Woman 1984" earned an estimated \$5.5 million in ticket sales according to studio estimates Sunday. It's a 67% drop for the superhero sequel, which is simultaneously playing on 2,151 screens and streaming free for HBO Max subscribers.

"Wonder Woman 1984" has made \$28.5 million to date from the U.S., where about 39% of theaters are open and most major markets, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and San Francisco, are closed. Internationally, it added \$10.1 million, bringing its global total to \$118.5 million.

While \$5.5 million would be a terrible second weekend for a \$200 million movie in a pre-pandemic world, under the unique circumstances it was enough to top the domestic charts. In second place is Universal's "The

Croods: A New Age," which saw a 25% increase in ticket sales in its sixth week in theaters. It's made \$34.5 million since it opened at Thanksgiving and is also now available to rent on premium video on demand.

Disney and Pixar's "Soul," which skipped U.S. theaters and is available for free for Disney+ subscribers, added \$16.5 million internationally—a 114% increase from its opening in the same markets last weekend. The film featuring the voices of Jamie Foxx and Tina Fey has done particularly well in China, where it more than doubled its opening sum and added \$13.7 million this weekend. The studio attributed the gains to strong social media reactions and word of mouth.

Ridley Scott's 1979 classic "Alien" also opened this weekend through Disney's 20th Century Studios. It made \$75,000 from 505 locations.

Dave Chappelle set to turn Ohio firehouse into a comedy club

YELLOW SPRINGS, Ohio (AP)—Comedian Dave Chappelle is set to buy a former fire station near his Ohio hometown with plans to turn it into a comedy club.



Chappelle

The Miami Twp. Fire Station in Yellow Springs, not far from Dayton, will be sold to the 47-year-old actor's company and turned into a club that will seat 140 people, the Dayton Daily News reported.

A member of the development corporation board who headed up the subcommittee on selling the fire station said the group wanted someone who would breathe life into the station.

"We think this will bring a

new class of jobs to town," Corrie Van Ausdal said. "We also considered that (Chappelle) is a minority business owner, he has a history of employing minorities and he is a person who has a clear commitment to

amplifying voices of color." The closing date for the sale is set for early 2021, said Lisa Abel, president of the Yellow Springs Development Corp. who is carrying out the sale.

Chappelle's ties to Ohio go back to his father, who graduated from Antioch College, in Yellow Springs, and later was a professor there. Chappelle lives with his family outside the village and also owns homes in nearby Xenia.

Being Judy Garland won Zellweger an Oscar. Is a Grammy award next?

NEW YORK (AP)—Renée Zellweger is known for acting but you could easily write a thesis about her love for music.

The entertainer won her second Academy Award for



Zellweger

portraying Judy Garland in last year's "Judy," for which Zellweger did her own singing in front of live audiences. She was praised for her performance in 2002's "Chicago." And she's an avid concertgoer and live-music appreciator who jumped up and down in her gown when Eminem surprised the audience at last year's Oscars and despite being an A-list star, sneaks out to concerts just to get her music fix.

She's also a proud card-carrying member of the Beyhive. "She raises the bar when it

comes to work ethic. I admire with her that if she's going to do it, she's knocking it into the stratosphere or she's not going to do it," said Zellweger, who gushed over Beyoncé's groundbreaking performance at the 2005 Oscars. "She was the north star on that one ... She's the one carrying that gift we're all so blessed to experience in one way or another."

So it should be no surprise—unless you're Zellweger—that she's earned her first Grammy nomination this year. The "Judy" soundtrack, which features Zellweger covering songs like "Over the Rainbow" and "The Trolley Song," is nominated for best traditional pop vocal album—an award Tony Bennett has won a dozen times.

Parents clash over who should discipline their children

DEAR ABBY: I am a single father of three wonderful kids. When my wife and I separated, we agreed to 50/50 custody and a property settlement. Everything went smoothly. A year later I requested, and was granted, full custody of my children. Their mom has visitation, but that's it.

Shortly after my separation, I met a woman and we became good friends. I waited about a year before introducing her to my children because I wanted to make sure I knew her first.

Although we are not "officially" in a relationship, she has been more than willing to step in and help with the children. In a few instances she has disciplined them because of bad behaviors. It usually entails talking to them about what they did wrong and some sort of consequence—loss of toys or privileges.

When they went to visit their mother and she heard about it, she wasn't happy. She called me very upset saying my friend had no right to discipline our kids. I see nothing wrong with it, but I am second-guessing myself. Some advice, please?

CONCERNED DAD IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR CONCERNED DAD: If your lady friend's "discipline" EVER went further than a talking-to, then their mother is right. Because you have primary custody of the

children, YOU should be the parent who levies penalties if they misbehave and a punishment is warranted.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a very social person and part of a close-knit friend group, but my boyfriend is on the introverted side. Although he is sweet and thoughtful, he doesn't have many friends of his own, and he tends to enjoy independent hobbies. Since learning that my friendships are very important to me, he has made a huge effort with my friends and their boyfriends. In the past, he invited them to movies, reached out and attempted to engage them in multiple ways.

I have watched from a distance, hoping they could forge a connection, but they ignore or avoid him, and he recently shared his worry that they don't like him. I don't blame him for thinking that, and I'm starting to feel sad for him and frustrated with my friends. At what point do I talk to them about this? Should I just let the relationships happen organically (if they happen)? Should I interfere at all?

TORN IN TEXAS

DEAR TORN: You didn't mention how old you are, or how long you and your boyfriend have been involved. I do not think it would be interfering to ask your friends why they seem unwilling to accept him. Their answers might

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

be enlightening.

At some ages, circles have formed and it's difficult to break in and gain acceptance. If there is something about your boyfriend that makes them uncomfortable, it would be better if you knew what it was. However, ultimately, he should socialize with you and these friends at his comfort level. You may also need to seek out new friends and cultivate relationships together as a couple.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Browns make playoffs for 1st time since 2002



OHIO (AP)— Welcome to the postseason, Cleveland?

The Browns ended their string of non-playoff seasons on Sunday with a tighter-than-expected 24-22 victory over archrival Pittsburgh, which sat many of its starters. Cleveland returned to the NFL in 1999, made the playoffs in 2002, and then, zilch. Until now.

"It's a moment I'll never forget," quarterback Baker Mayfield said. "But we're not satisfied. We expected to be here."

The NFL's two longest playoff droughts have been snapped with the advancements of Tampa Bay and Cleveland, both 11-5. The Buccaneers, who downed Atlanta 44-27, already were in and secured the fifth seed in the NFC, setting up a visit to the sub-.500 NFC East winner Washington on Saturday night. Tampa Bay's last trip to the postseason was 2007.

The Jets now have the unenviable streak of going home early, beginning in 2011.

Cleveland gets a rematch next Sunday night with the Steelers, who will have back their regulars in Pittsburgh. Regardless, this is an unfamiliar feeling in the Dawg Pound.

"There are hundreds of thousands, not just here," defensive end Myles Garrett said of the Browns' fan support. "The 12,000 here, that was great, but there are so many Browns (fans) all over the world who were happy to see us get this win and finally get into the dance."

Washington 20, Eagles 14

In the end, this was how the NFC East had to be won.

In a sloppy game featuring stagnant offenses and questionable coaching decisions, the Washington Football Team stumbled into the playoffs with a 20-14 win over the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday. The game concluded the NFL's regular season and put a merciful end to play in the NFC East, which crowned a 7-9 champion with Washington's win.

In winning the division, Washington eliminated the New York Giants, which had remained alive for a playoff spot after improving to 6-10 with a win over the Dallas Cowboys earlier Sunday. The Giants swept Washington and held the tiebreaker, but finished the season a game behind their division rivals and out of the playoffs.

Titans 41, Texans 38

The Tennessee Titans won the



AP
Cleveland Browns linebacker Jacob Phillips (50) tackles Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Ray-Ray McCloud (14) during the first half of an NFL game, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021, in Cleveland.

Ty Montgomery ran for 105 yards on 18 carries for the Saints (12-4), who became the first team to sweep the NFC South by going 6-0 since the division was formed in 2002.

Raiders 32, Broncos 31

Darren Waller caught Derek Carr's 2-point conversion pass with 24 seconds left, and Las Vegas rallied to beat Denver despite committing four turnovers.

The Broncos (5-11) reached the Las Vegas 45-yard line with 9 seconds left and Brandon McManus' 63-yard field-goal try was blocked by Maxx Crosby, who also blocked McManus' record 70-yard attempt on the last play of the first half.

Chargers 38, Chiefs 21

Justin Herbert threw for 302 yards and accounted for four touchdowns against a team of mostly Kansas City backups, and the Chargers rolled to a victory as the Chiefs turned their attention to the postseason and Los Angeles to the precarious future of coach Anthony Lynn.

The Chiefs (14-2) already had wrapped up the No. 1 seed and the AFC's lone first-round bye, so coach Andy Reid chose rest over reps by sitting quarterback Patrick Mahomes, safety Tyrann Mathieu and several of his best players.

Vikings 37, Lions 35

Kirk Cousins threw for 405 yards and three touchdowns, lifting Minnesota to a win over Detroit in a matchup of teams finishing disappointing seasons.

The Vikings (7-9) failed for the fourth time in a decade to make two straight trips to the playoffs. They won five of six midway through the season to return to the postseason race, but dashed hopes by losing three straight before closing with a win at Detroit.

AFC South on Sunday. All it took was Derrick Henry surpassing 2,000 yards rushing and rookie Sam Sloan's 37-yard field goal that bounced off the upright and through for a victory over the Houston Texans.

Henry ran for a career-high 250 yards in the victory that gave Tennessee (11-5) its first AFC South title since 2008 and is the fifth straight loss for the Texans (4-12). The Titans needed the air game to set up Sloan's winner, though: a 52-yard reception by A.J. Brown moments after a 51-yard field goal by Houston tied it with 18 seconds left.

Tennessee will host Baltimore (11-5) next weekend.

Colts 28, Jaguars 14

Jonathan Taylor rushed for a franchise-record 253 yards and two scores, capping Indianapolis' playoff-clinching victory over Jacksonville with a 45-yard touchdown run with 3:35 to go.

Philip Rivers threw for another score and the Colts' defense shut out the Jaguars over the final quarter to help preserve the victory.

Indianapolis (11-5) will make its first postseason appearance since 2018 and its second since 2015. The Colts will be the No. 7 seed and face Buffalo on the road.

Jacksonville (1-15) lost its final 15 games and will have the No. 1 overall draft pick in April.

Rams 18, Cardinals 7

John Wolford passed for 231 yards and rushed for 56 more in his NFL debut, and Los Angeles is headed to the playoffs with a victory over Arizona.

Troy Hill returned an interception 84 yards for a touch-

down to lead yet another dominant defensive performance by the Rams (10-6), who earned their third postseason berth in four years under coach Sean McVay.

Packers 35, Bears 16

Aaron Rodgers threw for four touchdowns, breaking his franchise record for scoring passes in a season, and Green Bay clinched the No. 1 seed in the NFC by beating playoff-bound Chicago.

The Packers (13-3) earned a bye while winning their sixth in a row and beat Chicago (8-8) for the 19th time in 22 games, counting the postseason.

The Bears are headed to the playoffs for the second time in coach Matt Nagy's three years despite the loss because Arizona fell to the Los Angeles Rams. Chicago will be at New Orleans (12-4).

Rodgers joined Peyton Manning (2004 and 2013) as the only players to throw for at least 45 touchdowns in multiple seasons.

Ravens 38, Bengals 3

Baltimore used a club-record 404 yards rushing to clinch a playoff spot, beating Cincinnati as Lamar Jackson threw three touchdown passes and became the first NFL quarterback to rush for more than 1,000 yards in two consecutive seasons.

The Ravens rolled up 525 total yards, and the 404 rushing yards were the most surrendered by a Bengals defense. Rookie J.K. Dobbins rushed for 160 yards and two touchdowns, including a 72-yard scoring romp in the third quarter.

Baltimore won its fifth straight game and advanced to

the postseason for a third consecutive season.

Bills 56, Dolphins 26

Josh Allen and Buffalo placed an emphatic stamp on a breakout season with a rout of Miami in a game that helped knock the Dolphins out of the playoffs.

Miami's postseason hopes ended when the Indianapolis Colts beat Jacksonville later in the day. The Bills will host the Colts next week.

The Dolphins (10-6) also didn't get results they needed to clinch their third playoff berth in 18 years early in the day when Cleveland beat Pittsburgh and Baltimore routed Cincinnati.

Seahawks 26, 49ers 23

Russell Wilson connected on two fourth-quarter touchdown passes to Tyler Lockett and Seattle rallied for a win over San Francisco to end the season on a four-game winning streak.

Seattle (12-4) had a chance to earn the No. 1 seed in the NFC playoffs but stayed at No. 3 after the New Orleans Saints and top-seeded Green Bay Packers both won. The Seahawks will

host the division rival Los Angeles Rams in the wild-card round next weekend.

Buccaneers 44, Falcons 27

Tom Brady threw for 399 yards and four touchdowns, helping playoff-bound Tampa Bay clinch the fifth seed in the NFC with a regular season-ending win over Atlanta.

The victory, which means the Bucs (11-5) will face the NFC East champion, Washington or the Giants, on the road in the club's first postseason game in 13 years, may have come with a steep cost.

Brady threw touchdown passes of 29 and 4 yards to Chris Godwin. The six-time Super Bowl champion also tossed scoring passes of 25 and 30 yards to Antonio Brown.

Saints 33, Panthers 7

Drew Brees threw for 201 yards and three touchdowns, the Saints had five interceptions and New Orleans defeated Carolina to wrap up the No. 2 seed in the NFC playoffs.

The Saints will host the seventh-seeded Chicago Bears in the wild-card round next weekend.



Curry's career-high 62 lead Warriors past Blazers



SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Stephen Curry let it fly from way out under pressure with a minute-plus left for another perfect swish on the way to a career-high 62 points, and the Golden State Warriors beat Portland 137-122 on Sunday night to split the two-game set with the Trail Blazers.

Curry had the highest-scoring game in the NBA this season, finishing 18 for 31 and 8 of 16 on 3-pointers after beginning with a 21-point first quarter. He had his 10th career 30-point half to help the Warriors take a 66-54 at the break.

One small blemish in his brilliant night: Curry had his streak of free throws snapped at a franchise-record 80 in the first. The run dated to March 29, 2019, vs. Memphis. Against Portland, he made a career-high 18 on 19 attempts.

Damian Lillard scored 32 points for Portland, and CJ McCollum added 28. McCollum shot 2 for 8 from deep after his 25 3-pointers over the initial five games left him and Curry as the only players to ever do so.

After Portland's 25-point win Friday night, the Warriors were embarrassed and determined to be more aggressive and defend better after the Blazers came out firing to finish 20 of 43 from deep—and they looked more energetic on the defensive end. Portland shot 14 of 43 on 3s Sunday.

Curry did it all on the other end. When he sat down for good in the waning seconds and received hugs from teammates, the piped in crowd noise seemed extra loud in an arena devoid of real fans.

Draymond Green had eight assists and scored one point playing his second game of the season with his minutes increased from just below 18 to 28. Green is still finding his wind. His return Friday marked his first game since Feb. 27 against the Lakers and a stretch of 309 days. He had been sidelined the first four games by a right foot injury after being delayed starting training camp because he had the coronavirus.

Warriors No. 2 overall draft pick James Wiseman had 12 points, a career-best 11 rebounds and two blocks.

Lakers 108, Grizzlies 94

LeBron James had 22 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists, Anthony Davis added 17 points and nine rebounds and the Los Angeles Lakers opened a two-game set in Memphis with a 108-94 victory over the Grizzlies on Sunday night.

James played within the offense for the first three quar-



ters, then became more aggressive to start the fourth, scoring the Lakers first 10 points of the period. His 3-pointer with 2:34 left made it 101-90.

Montrezl Harrell added 16 points and nine rebounds to help the Lakers win their third straight.

Kyle Anderson led Memphis with 18 points, and Jonas Valanciunas had 14 points and 10 rebounds. Tyus Jones also had 14 points, and rookie Desmond Bane had 13.

The teams will meet again Tuesday night.

Bulls 118, Mavericks 108

Zach LaVine had 39 points and Coby White scored 21 of his 23 points in the second half to lead the Chicago Bulls to a over the Dallas Mavericks.

Jalen Brunson, starting in place of the injured Luka Doncic, had 31 points for the Mavericks.

Otto Porter Jr. added 15 for the Bulls, who were without starter Lauri Markkanen and reserves Tomas Satoransky, Chandler Hutchison and Ryan Arcidiacono.

Doncic sat out because of a left quadriceps contusion. He was injured Friday night in the second quarter of a home victory over Miami Heat. He continued to play and finished with season highs of 27 points and 15 rebounds. He's listed as day-to-day, with his status Monday night at Houston uncertain.

"We'll see how he is tomorrow," Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said. "We don't think this is a long-term thing."

Celtics 122, Pistons 120

Jayson Tatum hit a fallaway as Blake Griffin stumbled with 2.9 seconds left, then tied up the Detroit veteran on the other end to help Boston beat the Pistons for a weekend split.

Jaylen Brown led Boston with 31 points. He hit a late 3-pointer and was 13 of 16 from the field, two nights after his late miss sealed a loss in the opener in Detroit. Tatum had 24 points and 12 assists.

Jerami Grant scored 22 points for the Pistons, his career-best fifth straight game with at least 20.

On Friday night, Detroit

beat Boston 96-93 for its only victory of the season.

Wizards 123, Nets 122

Bradley Beal had 27 points, 10 rebounds and the assist on Thomas Bryant's go-ahead dunk with 14.9 seconds left, leading Washington past Brooklyn.

Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant missed jumpers on the last possession, dropping the Nets to 3-4.

Russell Westbrook had 24 points and 10 assists but only five rebounds after recording triple-doubles in his first four games with the Wizards. Bryant finished with 21 points and 14 rebounds to help Washington win its second straight after an 0-5 start.

Irving had 30 points and 10 assists, and Durant had 28 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists.

Nuggets 124, Timberwolves 109

Jamal Murray scored a season-high 36 points, Nikola Jokic had 19 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists for his fourth triple-double of the season and

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) drives to the basket against Portland Trail Blazers center Jusuf Nurkic (27) and guard Gary Trent Jr. (2) during the first half of an NBA game in San Francisco, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021.

Denver beat Minnesota

Murray scored 26 points in the first half, including 16 in the second quarter.

Malik Beasley, the former Denver draft pick traded to the Timberwolves last season, scored a season-high 25 for Minnesota.

The teams will complete home-and home set Tuesday night in Denver.

Jazz 130, Spurs 109

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 28 points and Utah made a season-high 21 3-pointers to beat San Antonio.

Donovan Mitchell added 22 points and nine assists in 29 minutes. Utah was 21 for 41 on 3-pointers compared to 6 for 19 by San Antonio.

Keldon Johnson had 22 points for the Spurs. San Antonio suffered its fourth straight loss as well as its largest margin of defeat.

Clippers 112, Suns 17

For four minutes of the first half Sunday, the Clippers could not miss, scoring 23 unanswered points against the Phoenix Suns.

The run ballooned the Clippers' lead to 31 points, and the finale of their two-game road trip appeared to be headed in the direction of so many other games this season—a blowout.

But then, for three minutes late in the fourth quarter, their once-lopsided lead down to single digits, the Clippers could not score, and what surely looked like perhaps their most impressive victory was on the verge of becoming their most dispiriting loss.

Paul George, after a three-pointer to push the lead to nine points with 3 minutes 11 seconds remaining, could not get the ball where he wanted thanks to a hounding Phoenix defense, and Kawhi Leonard missed four shots in a row.

It was an ominous stretch, until George, who finished with a season-high 39 points, found Nicolas Batum in the corner with 11 seconds left for a three-pointer that stopped the Clippers' slide.

Aussie Open quarantine plan facing legal challenge

MELBOURNE—Apartment owners on the premises of a luxury Melbourne hotel are threatening legal action against plans by Australian Open organizers to use the hotel to quarantine players ahead of the Grand Slam, local media reported on Monday.

The apartment owners at the Westin Melbourne said they had concerns for their health and never agreed to international players quarantining at the Westin, accusing the hotel's management of "ambushing" them with the plan.

"It's incredibly arrogant to ambush us this way as if it's a done deal. There are substantive public health and legal issues that have not even been examined," Mark Nicholson, a long-time apartment owner at the Westin, told Fairfax Media.

Hundreds of players are expected to arrive in Melbourne in mid-January and undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine as part of COVID-19 protocols before the Feb. 8-21 Australian Open.

"At 84, I'm in the vulnerable group and it's shocking the way they tried to ram this through without any attempt to consult with us," owner Digby Lewis told Fairfax.

"I'm more than happy to toss in \$10,000 or \$20,000 to help the legal fight, it's bloody shocking."

Westin management said their "COVID safe" plan had been shared with the owners corporation, adding that existing residents would have no contact or staff or guests and would use a separate entrance and lifts.

"Their floor will remain exclusive while there will be no reticulation of ventilation between the floors," the Westin said in a statement on Monday.

Tennis Australia did not provide immediate comment when contacted by Reuters on Monday.

Melbourne, Victoria's capital, was the epicenter of Australia's largest second wave outbreak of COVID-19, which started at two quarantine hotels for international arrivals.

More than 18,000 infections were recorded in Victoria during the outbreak and nearly 800 deaths.

Victoria recorded three new cases on Monday, as authorities scrambled to trace close contacts from an outbreak that began in mid-December in Sydney's Northern Beaches area.



Tokyo Olympics hit 200-days-to-go mark

TOKYO (AP)—Tick-Tock-Tick.

The countdown clock for the postponed Tokyo Olympics hit 200 days to go on Monday.

Tick-Tock-Tick.

Also on Monday, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he would consider calling a state of emergency as new coronavirus cases surge to record numbers in Tokyo and neighboring prefectures. Japan has never had a lockdown for COVID-19, attempting to juggle the economy and health risks.

Tick-Tock-Tick.

It's nearing deadline time for Tokyo Olympic organizers, the International Olympic Committee, and various Japa-

nese government entities as they try to pull off the Games in the middle of a pandemic.

Officials have promised to announce concrete plans early in the new year about how to get 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes into Japan; about the safety of the Athletes Village, and hundreds of thousands of fans, media, judges, officials, broadcasters and VIPs.

The new year is here.

Suga pledged again to hold the Olympics, saying it would be "proof that people have overcome the coronavirus." And he said vaccine approval would be speeded up by a

month so that vaccinations could begin in February instead of March.

Japan has attributed more than 3,400 deaths to COVID-19, modest by global standards for a country of 125 million, but worrying as new cases rise quickly.

A poll last month by national broadcaster NHK show 63% want the Olympics postponed or canceled.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike and the governors of Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures asked the national government Saturday to declare the state of emergency after the capital saw a daily record of 1,337 new cases on New



AP

Year's Eve. That marked a jump of almost 400 in just a few days.

Yoshiro Mori, the president of the organizing committee and a former prime minister, again ruled out any cancellation of the games in an interview several days ago with the Nikkan Sports newspaper. He was asked when a decision would come about having local fans or fans from abroad.

"Sometime from March through May," he replied. "The final deadline for a decision would be May, but it may come sooner."

Any reduction in fans will hit the organizing committee budget. Tokyo has budgeted \$800 million for ticket sales, and any shortfall will have to be made up by government entities, which are footing most of the Olympic bills.

The official budget for the Tokyo Olympics was increased

A man looks at a countdown calendar showing 200 day to start Tokyo 2020 Olympics Monday, Jan. 4, 2021, in Tokyo.

last month to \$15.4 billion, an increase of \$2.8 billion because of the delay. However, several government audits the last few years suggest the real number is about \$25 billion.

All but \$6.7 billion is public money.

Mori indicated the opening ceremony, scheduled for July 23, could be troublesome with thousands of athletes and officials gathering to parade around the stadium. He also suggested the ceremony couldn't be shortened, since television broadcasters had paid for the lucrative time. He said some officials might be cut out of the parade.

Television determines much of the Olympic scheduling, and selling broadcast rights accounts for 73% of the IOC's income. Another 18% is from

large sponsors such as Coca-Cola and Toyota.

The torch relay, which begins on March 25, will also face crowding with 10,000 runners expected across almost four months. Coca-Cola and Toyota are the prime sponsors.

Meanwhile, the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee appointed Hiroshi Sasaki on Wednesday as the head creative director for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics and Paralympics.

He replaces Mansai Nomura, a well-known actor in traditional Japanese comedic theater, and also a film actor. He was in charge of the ceremonies when the Olympics were postponed in March by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nomura will remain as an adviser.

MRA

From Page 20

isher, as he was also in front right at the get-go and up to the finish line of the six-lap race. Henry Camacho, riding his ATV, was ranked second, while Ray Yumul placed third.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
In this screen grab, two ATV riders are in a close race during the Marianas Racing Association Series 6 last Sunday at the former CowTown Raceway.

Patrick Cabrera rounded out the finishers list in the Veterans Class.

In the Novice Class, Corry Pangelinan extended his streak in the division after ruling the seven-lap race. He prevailed against Keoni Marcanas, Henry Camacho Jr.,

Vince Torres, Kier Agda, and Myron Castro.

Meanwhile, MRA's first race for 2021 also featured competitions in the Pee wee 1 and 2 and Expert Open and results of these classes will be reported in *Saipan Tribune's* Wednesday edition.

EASY

From Page 20

offense, the Lady Ol'Aces had no players making more than two field goals in the first half, leaving the team in a deep hole at the break.

The Lady Ol'Aces fell behind further when the game resumed, as help did not come in the second half with the team still down to five players in the finale.

The Baby Ol'Aces, on the other hand, continued to get a good game from Joyce and Fernandez plus several baskets from three other players to complete their domination of the Lady Ol'Aces. Fernandez and Joyce capped their long-game brilliance by knocking in two triples each in the second half, helping the Baby Ol'Aces secure the division championship.

The Baby Ol'Aces' two gunners ended up winning the major awards in the division with Fernandez getting the Finals MVP trophy and Joyce bagging the regular season

MVP plum. Fernandez also led the division in steals with her nine, while Rangamar ruled the assists department after making eight. The Lady Ol'Aces' Cassandra Camacho and Rollers Blue's Jamila Alegre completed the individual awardees list after topping the rebounds (18) and blocks (two) categories, respectively.

Meanwhile, Rollers Basketball Club, which organized the holiday tournament, would like to acknowledge Pacific Amusement, QQ Rent A Car, and MARPAC for supporting the competition and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force for allowing the group to hold the event amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Baby Ol'Aces 59—Fernandez 24, Joyce 19, S. Camacho 8, Acosta 2, Roligat 2, Santos 2, Saralu 2.

Lady Ol'Aces 28—C. Camacho 8, D. Camacho 8, Simram 6, Pangelinan 3, Otiwii 3.

Scoring by halves: 30-13, 59-28.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Lady Ol'Aces' Lia Rangamar, left, dribbles past Rollers Red's Judy Andebor during their preliminary round match in the women's division of the Rollers 2020 Holiday Tournament at the Koblerville Gymnasium. Rangamar recorded the most assists (8) in the division.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Lady Ol'Aces' Cassandra Camacho, left, seen here pulling up for a shot in their game against Rollers Red, hauled the most rebounds (18) in the tournament.



Browns make playoffs for 1st time since 2002

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Curry's career-high 62 lead Warriors past Blazers

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE



JOSEPH CHIN

In this screen grab, female riders get ready at the starting line during the "Powerpuff" race in the Marianas Racing Association Series 6 last Sunday at the former CowTown Raceway.

'Powerpuff' race in MRA

By **ROSELYN B. MONROYO**
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REPORTER

The Marianas Racing Association marked the start of the 2021 season with an all-female race dubbed as "Powerpuff" Class last Sunday during the MRA Series 6 at the former CowTown Raceway in Marpi.

Edinna Cepeda, Shaniah Alvarez, Nanako Celis, Billie Pangelinan, Melsh Cepeda, Harley Susulin, and Maribel Igitol negotiated five laps of the course for the first motocross race featuring female riders on Saipan since 2008, according to MRA vice president Cuki Alvarez.



Igitol ended up topping the division, as she won the last three laps. Edinna, who led in the first two laps settled for the runner-up honors, while Pangelinan came in third and was followed by Alvarez and Susulin.

In the Mini 1 Class, M.J. Camacho continued his winning ways, as he led from start to finish in the six-lap race. Siblings Ethan and Devin Yumul joined Camacho in the race with the former placing second.

In the Veterans Class (ATV/Dirt Bike), Melvin Cepeda was the overall fin-

See MRA on Page 19

Easy title win for Baby Ol'Aces

By **ROSELYN B. MONROYO**
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REPORTER

The Baby Ol'Aces came out locked and loaded in the rubber match against the Lady Ol'Aces for a 59-28 title win in the women's division of the Rollers 2020 Holiday Tournament last Saturday at the Koblerville Gymnasium.

After losing Game 1 of the finals showdown, 25-36, the Baby Ol'Aces returned to the court for the deciding Game 2 and showed up with enough firepower to



shoot down the Lady Ol'Aces.

Alliyah Fernandez and Paulyn Joyce teamed up in the Baby Ol'Aces' demolition of the Lady Ol'Aces after scoring

more than half of the champion squad's total points. Fernandez delivered 24 points, while Joyce added 19.

Fernandez made 16 of her points in the first half to hand the Baby Ol'Aces a commanding 30-13 halftime lead. Joyce was also on target in the opening half, logging 12 points.

The Lady Ol'Aces could not keep up with Fernandez and Joyce's hot shooting, as they were missing key players in the rubber, including Lia Rangamar and Tas Deleon Guerrero. With limited options on

See EASY on Page 19



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Players and coaches of the Baby and Lady Ol'Aces pose for a photo after their title showdown.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Baby Ol'Aces' Alliyah Fernandez, right, drives against a Rollers Red defender during a preliminary round game in the women's division of the Rollers 2020 Holiday Tournament at the Koblerville Gymnasium. Fernandez scored 24 points in their 59-28 title win over the Lady Ol'Aces last Saturday.